

# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# Imagine FX

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Inside

PAINT IN THE STYLE  
OF ASHLEY WOOD

HOW TO FINISH  
ARTWORK LIKE A PRO

YOUR FANTASY ART  
CREATIONS ON SHOW

# BREATHE LIFE INTO YOUR DIGITAL ART

Feed your creative flair! Make your Photoshop  
paintings come alive, with Charlie Bowater



CHARLES VESS! THE STARDUST ILLUSTRATOR SHARES HIS ART TECHNIQUES

# More than just a pretty face.



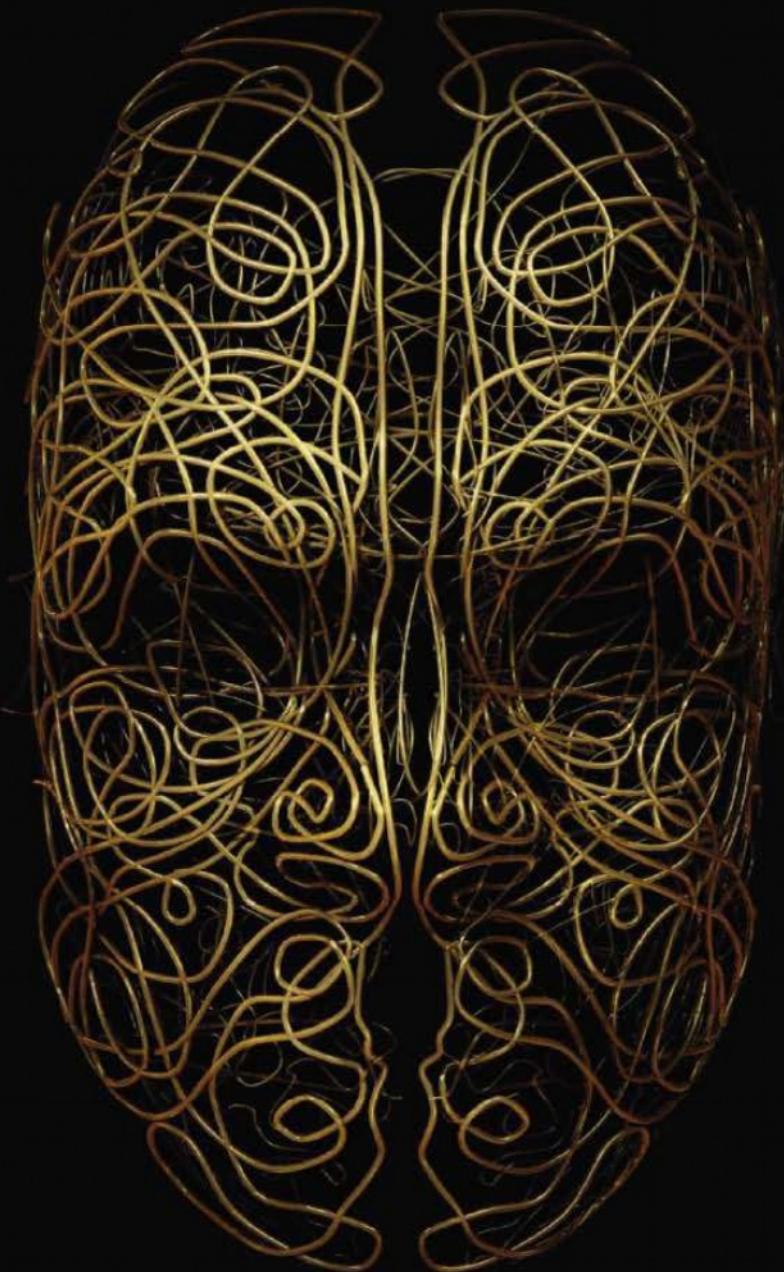
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# Welcome... to a new start



The dawn of another year brings fresh hope for a change from the norm: perhaps a new job, a different location, or a promise to develop a new hobby or skill. Most of you have vowed in some way that 2011 will be your year for art – and for that we're here to help.

This issue, we've laid on a plethora of top-notch artists to inspire you to get creating in new ways. I'm sure many of you were taken with the mesmerising cover image by Charlie Bowater (our hot tip for 2011). On page 70 she reveals how she breathes life into her fantasy imagery. Or, if you've never got the hang of sketching, you won't want to miss part one of Justin Gerard's guide to drawing on page 96. Get your pencils at the ready.

Elsewhere, you can learn how to incorporate GIMP and SketchUp into your workflow. You should also take a close look at our Reader FXPosé section, starting on page 8. Could your art grace these pages this year? Turn to page 17 to find out how you can submit your work.

Whatever your artistic aspirations are for the coming 12 months, I wish you the very best and I know that ImagineFX will be here to help in your endeavours to reach your new goals.

Claire

**Claire Howlett, Editor**  
[claire@imaginefx.com](mailto:claire@imaginefx.com)

## Tell us what you think!

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Our special cover for  
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The First Name in 3D Landscapes

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**DAZ 3D**

Illustration by: David Brinnen

# Cover artist



# ImagineFX Cover artist

Known as much for her engaging blog as she is for her beautiful paintings, Charlie turned her in-demand attention to our cover...



## Charlie Bowater

**COUNTRY:** England

**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop

**WEB:** charlie40588.deviantart.com  
Self-taught artist Charlie is fast becoming the next big thing in fantastical portrait painting. She confesses to sucking at painting male figures and loves painting women because it's her niche. It's a niche that's fast becoming her forte, as her unique, eye-catching figures and colour palette are becoming very popular.



## In progress

How Charlie's cover blossomed into life...



Editor Claire wanted this cover to depict a spellbinding female surrounded by life and nature. Art editor Paul sketched out a few cover ideas for the pose and overall look.



We've wanted Charlie to create a cover for us for a long time and knew that the theme would be perfect for her. Above is one of her first thumbnail cover ideas.



We opted for this cover idea from Charlie because it would complement all of our cover hits perfectly. Now all we had to do was to pick a colour theme...

Receive great savings and get every issue delivered to your door when you subscribe! See page 34

worldmags

# ImagineFX

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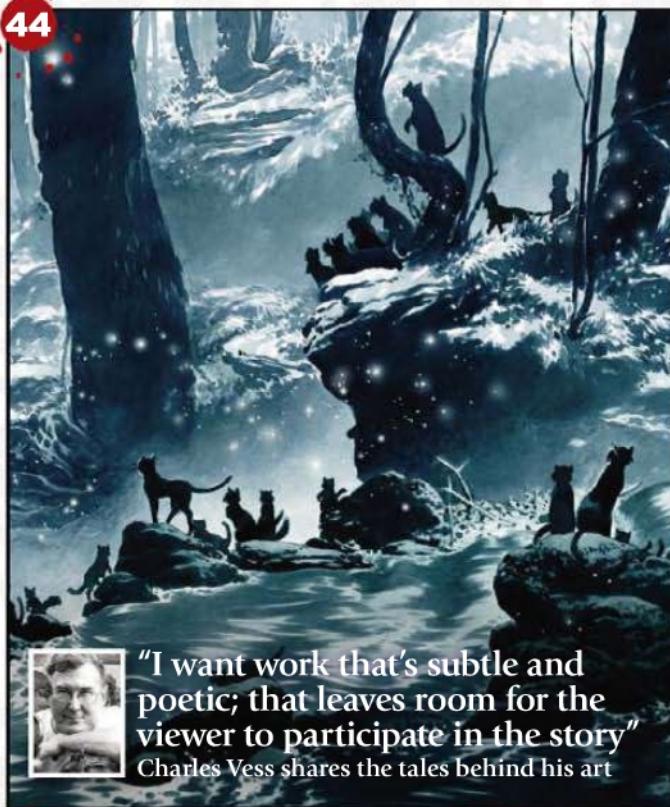
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"I want work that's subtle and poetic; that leaves room for the viewer to participate in the story"  
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Studio profile

Reader  
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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➤

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Use colour to attract attention, draw complex machinery in no time, paint

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**Video workshops on your free DVD...**

Where you see this badge you'll find an accompanying video workshop in the corresponding folder on your DVD.

Turn to page 114 for more... ➔

## ON YOUR DVD

This month's essential art resources...

### Artist starter pack

Including ArtRage, Blender, GIMP and more.

### Human hair and skin textures

Great resources for painting people.



# Reader FX Posé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Weiyi Yin

**LOCATION:** China  
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**SOFTWARE:** Painter, 3ds Max, ZBrush



No sooner had Weiyi mastered traditional art techniques back in 1997, he was introduced to the world of digital art. He made his first digital piece in 2000.

"Since then, hundreds of my works have been collected in art volumes published by many famous CG organisations," he says, "and quite a few have even become examples in some software products." He's worked in game development for nine years.

1



**1 WARLORD** "This is the legendary King of War, who's able to absorb souls. He died under his own sword to make himself even more powerful."

**2 MAKING HAVOC IN HEAVEN** "Here's a scene of the Journey to the West, a classic Chinese novel in four parts. It depicts the victory pose of the main character Monkey King who, to win freedom, fought with and subsequently defeated the Gods."



## ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Weiyi Yin wins himself a copy of Exotique 5 and Character Modeling 3. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to [www.ballisticpublishing.com](http://www.ballisticpublishing.com).



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ImagineFX February 2011

FX Posé submissions to: [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)



## Artist crit

Acclaimed illustrator Patrick J Jones has nothing but praise for Weiye's victorious Monkey King

 "I like the monkey/human hybrid face and how it naturally fits the human body. Weiye has shown a good study of anatomy and use of reference here to create a believable humanoid."

1



2



3



### Pavidcha Arayaphong

**LOCATION:** US  
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**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop



"I'm a concept artist working at LucasFilm Feature Animation," Pavidcha tells us. Originally born and raised in Bangkok, he then moved to the United States with his family, settling in Issaquah, WA. "I had a background in architecture design before I attended an animation school in Seattle," he says, "but I've always loved fantasy art."

**1 JUNGLE CASTLE** "A mysterious white castle surrounded by petrified trees. The idea is to represent good and bad, while not telling you which is which."

**2 US BORDERS** "This is a personal piece of futuristic concept art that depicts a structure straddling the US border with Canada in 2100."

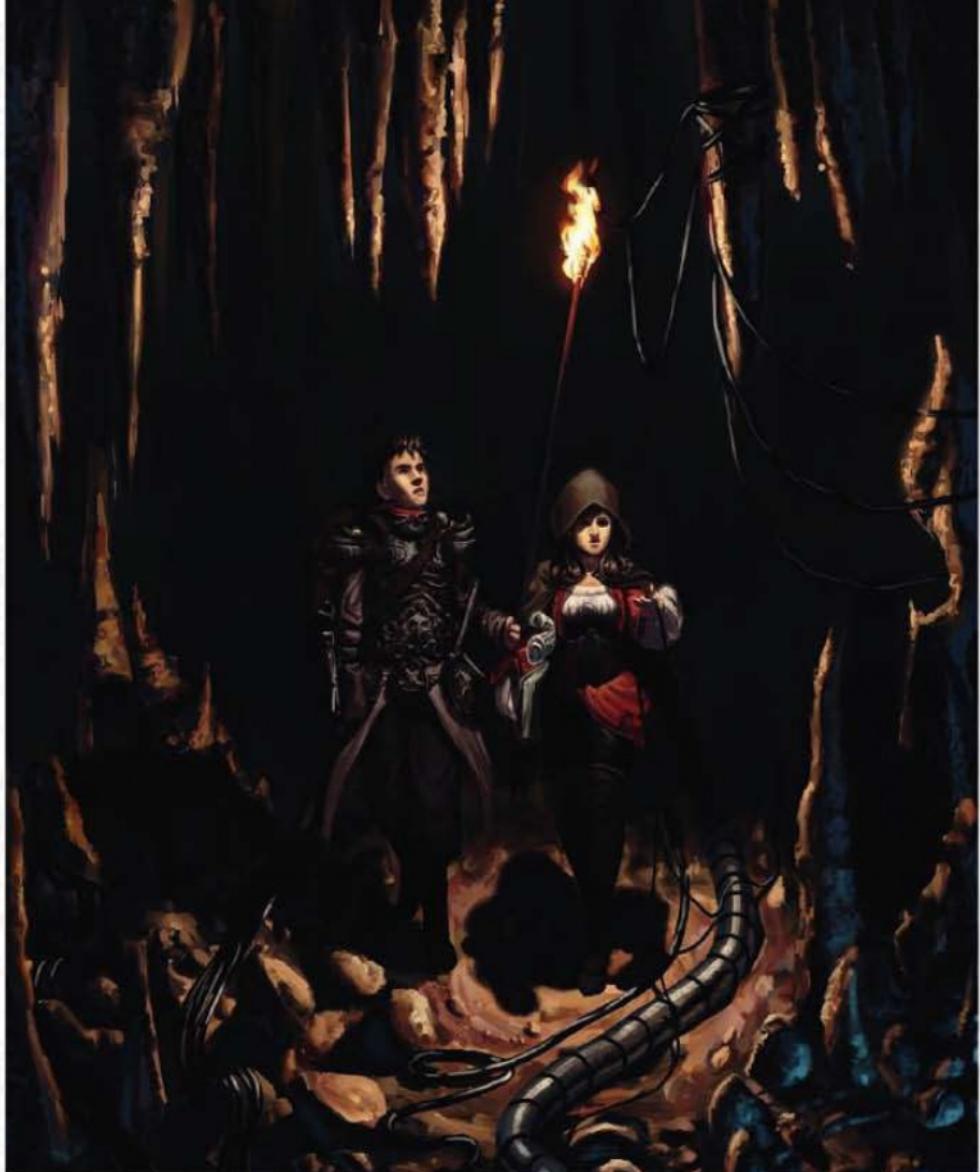
**3 TOWER OF DEFENSE** "I wanted to explore the mood and colour of a battlefield theme in this personal speed painting. It's a tower that protects the city above the cloud and there's only one way to enter it - ride high!"

 **Diego Alonso Rodriguez Serrano**  
**LOCATION:** Mexico  
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**EMAIL:** diegowise@gmail.com  
**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop



Living in a small city in the north west of Mexico, it was in a small, out-of-school club dubbed "The Comic Drawers" by architect tutor Abraham Katase where a 13-year-old Diego first tried his hand at drawing.

"I'm mostly a self-taught artist," he says, "experimenting and learning by watching others." Diego adds that he's very competitive: "Being that way helped me grow a lot as an artist. It seems that every time I met someone good at drawing, I felt a need to overcome that person, to be better than him or her."



#### 1 A WHOLE WORLD TO DISCOVER

"This was a painting I did for a contest with a sci-fi/fantasy fusion theme. The story is about a traveller in the year 1328, finding something strange that leads into a cavern full of cables, with a cyan light coming from inside the cave."

**2 SNOWFLAKE FAERIE** "This was made for the Character of the Week challenge over at ConceptArt.org. The theme was to create one of two types of faeries: a furry one (a good one), or a blizzard one (a faerie that attacks people). Mine's a blizzard faerie, hence the evil look."



#### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Diego's competitive streak has proved useful in developing his skills. I love his use of light that imbues his images with character and narrative – just what is causing that cyan light?"

**Ian Dean,**  
**Deputy Editor**

## Hai Bo Zhu

**LOCATION:** China  
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**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop, Painter, OpenCanvas, Artweaver, ArtRage, SAI, MSPaint



"I love drawing," says Hai. "I started learning digital painting in 2002, and got my first tablet, a Wacom FJ-410, soon afterwards." Getting this bit of kit was an epiphany for the artist. "I had no idea that a digital canvas could be so much fun, and recently, having upgraded to a Wacom Intuos 4, I've started teaching digital painting in the China Academy of Art in Shanghai."

**1 BONNIE AND CLYDE** "This is one of my class demos from 2009, to show my students how to create characters in a funny style. I painted them in Photoshop, starting in greyscale and then used a colour mode layer on top."

**2 ZOMBIEKILLER** "This image started as a quick Photoshop sketch. I don't usually paint zombies, but this time I wanted to give them a go – not only the shambling horrors, but also adding some funny details to the baby zombies."

## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I wouldn't want to meet Hai's version of Bonnie and Clyde on a dark night! The balance between the two figures is engaging – the slim fellow and his big, bulky lady friend is a classic contrast."

Claire Howlett,  
Editor

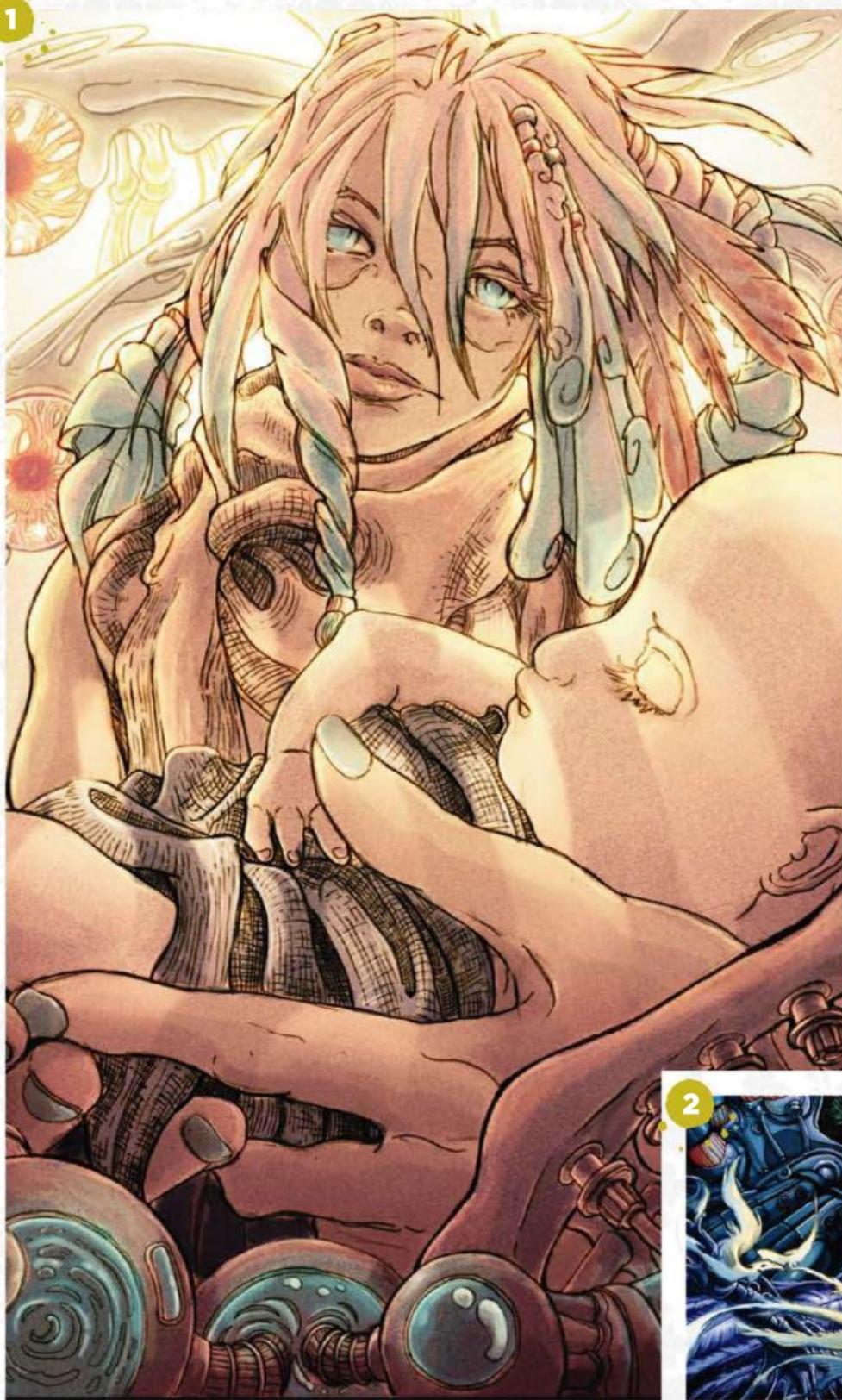
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**Jesca Marisa**

**LOCATION:** South Africa  
**WEB:** [www.jescamarisa.com](http://www.jescamarisa.com)  
**EMAIL:** [jescamarisa@yahoo.com](mailto:jescamarisa@yahoo.com)  
**SOFTWARE:** Flash, Photoshop



Passionate about storytelling, Jesca studied animation and scriptwriting for four years. "Afterwards this interest morphed into writing comics," she says, "while working as an illustrator by day. I love being wildly creative and I'm happy as long as I can work with my hands, whether it be making puppets, painting, sewing, jewellery... the list is endless."

Jesca is influenced by art nouveau, manga and children's book illustrations, and likes to "mix organic forms with decaying man-made objects".

**1 THE NEW ONE.** "Basically this is a scanned pencil image, placed on a textured background. I then coloured the shadows and midtones underneath the pencils and painted the highlights over the pencils. I used very basic hard-edged Photoshop brushes. Afterward I played around with the levels to get the image looking exactly how I wanted."

**2 MOTHERSHIP JOURNEY** "Pencil scanned into Photoshop, I used a tablet and then painted over the lines with a hard round brush, but still leaving some of the pencil intact for extra texture. I dragged in some fabric textures as a background layer."

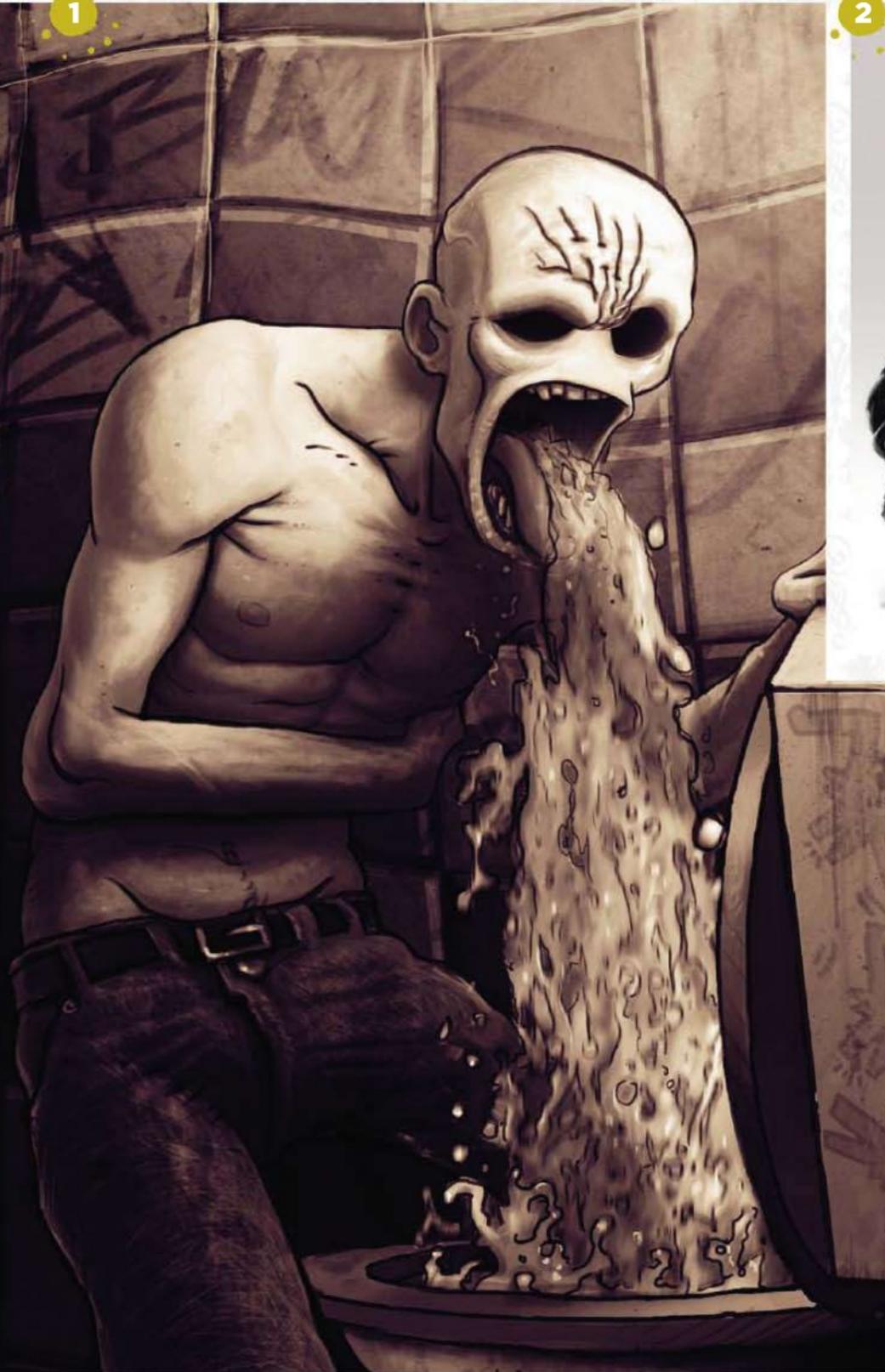
### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"With simple colours and an interesting perspective, *The New One* draws you in to the two characters, but further searching reveals a sci-fi pulse to this piece."

Beren Neale,  
Staff Writer

1



2



### **Ryan Lovelock**

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**WEB:** [ryanlovelock.deviantart.com](http://ryanlovelock.deviantart.com)  
**EMAIL:** [lognoll@hotmail.it](mailto:lognoll@hotmail.it)  
**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop



Having met "friends and mentors" on ConceptArt.org, Ryan has been posting "practically every drawing I've done in the past five years" on the online community site. "In the past couple of years my interest shifted from CA and illustration to comics," he says, "which is one of my biggest passions."

Ryan hasn't decided which art profession he wants to pursue, "but as long as it's challenging, it's telling a story and it involves drawing, it's good for me".

**1 BURP!** "This is the cover for the first issue of a self-published fanzine I created. The first idea came up as a joke, but I actually ended up painting it. I hope I never have to put so much attention into painting puke again in my life."

**2 AUTUMN GNOME** "This grumpy looking gnome walks around woods in autumn, muttering to himself while he collects dead leaves and sticks them in his top hat. Lots of weird ideas like this one pop up in my sketchbook, but I rarely take them to a further stage. I'm happy I did with this one."

## Kelsey Martin

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop, SketchBook



It was at high school that Kelsey first realised he could combine his two passions for games and art. "I then went to art school and got my foot in the door shortly after graduating in a local studio," he says, "and now I'm a lead artist at Griptone Games in Kirkland, WA." He's been in the video game industry for almost seven years now, and is busy putting more energy into personal projects on a daily basis.

**1 GHOUL** "I wanted to create a humanoid creature that resembles a zombie but isn't actually undead. He may be from a race of similar creatures that live deep underground."

**2 ROCKET HOUSE** "This is a concept piece I did to illustrate an idea that popped into my head. I imagined a scientist living in the woods who dreams of constructing his own rocket ship. He's turned part of his house into the launch centre for his home-made moon rocket."

**3 SEA BEAST** "This was done for an art activity I was running at work. The topic was alien oceans and its inhabitants. I illustrated one of the many threatening creatures that this merman-like alien has to face in his hostile environment."



## IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Alien oceans is a great topic. I wonder what this creature would evolve into millions of years later. Maybe that's Kelsey's next challenge?"

Paul Tysall,  
Art Editor

1



2



**Lu Vazquez**

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Having gone to art school, Lu took a position in commercial illustration. "I spent a few years doing that until I couldn't take any more," he says, "and so I decided to do fantasy art."

While his background is in traditional drawing techniques, Lu wanted to keep up with the times and so learnt how to paint digitally. "I chose to keep the core of what I learned from traditional mediums, and incorporated those ideas and methods into my digital art."

**1 DRAGONSAYER** "I wanted to paint another dragon image, only this time, the dragon is the one getting the short end of the stick."

**2 SEA TITAN** "There are a lot of images out there depicting terrifying monsters about to chomp down on helpless victims. With Sea Titan, I wanted to do something a little different. Maybe it's a gentle giant, more curious than hungry."

**3 CTHULHU** "I'm a huge fan of H.P. Lovecraft, and it was a no-brainer that I would eventually have to paint a homage to his best-known creation, Cthulhu the Dreamer."

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### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"It seems obvious, but making the colour of the monster sympathetic with the environment really solidifies Lu's art in all three of his images shown here. Of course, having well-designed monsters helps, too."

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor

### SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

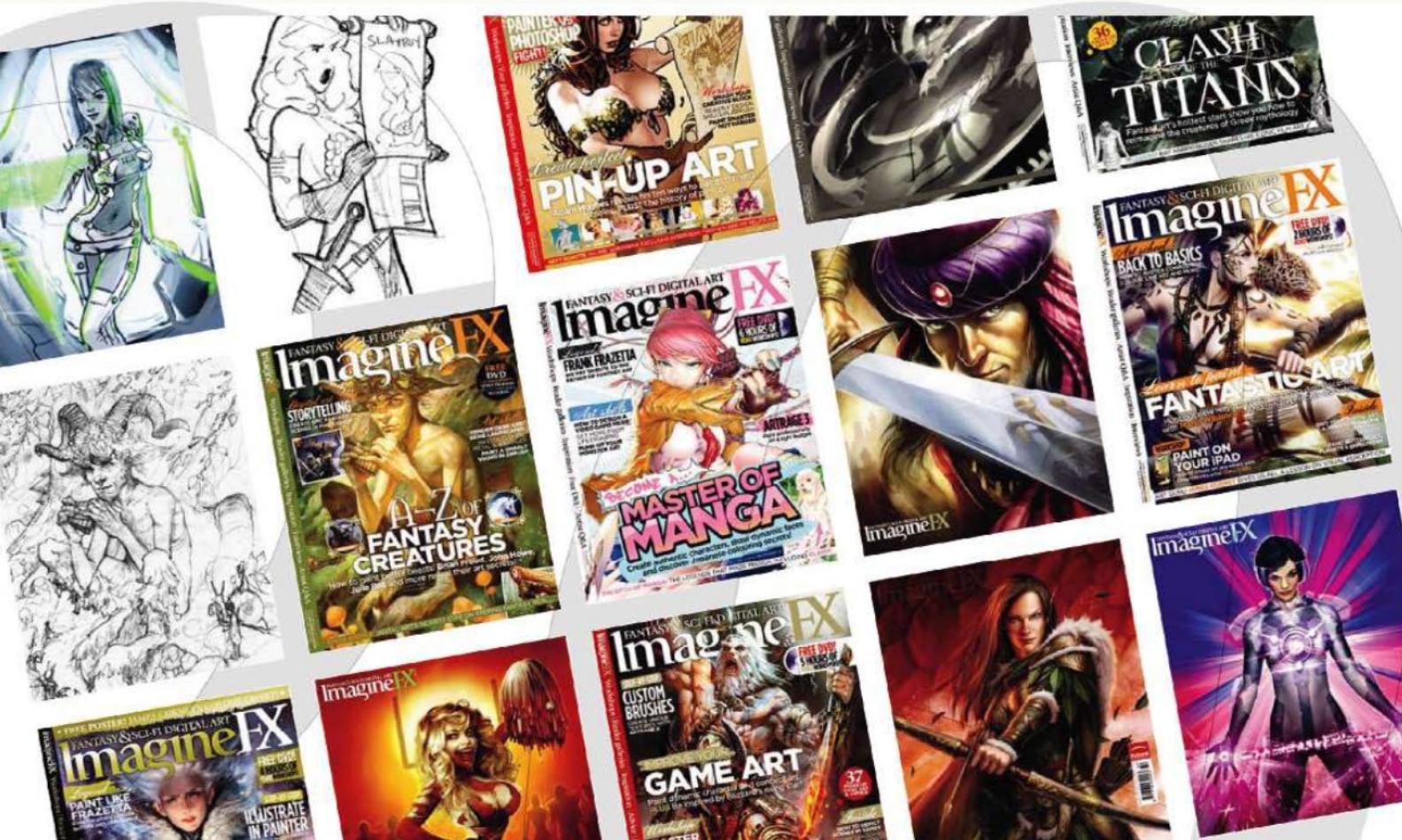
You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.  
**fxpose@imaginefx.com**

**SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:**  
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**ImagineFX**  
**30 Monmouth Street**  
**Bath, BA1 2BW**  
**UK**

# ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY



# 2010

## A year in review

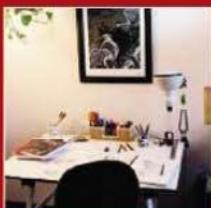
**Round up** It's been a year of highs and lows, seeing great new artists emerge but saying goodbye to others, and getting to grips with new software releases while many of us turned traditional. Join us as we look back on a good year with our readers...



We had a great time in 2010 creating exciting workshops, discovering new artists and connecting with legends.

But how was your year? What was your high point of 2010? For reader Lizzie Owen, it was discovering **ImagineFX** for the first time, "which became my obsession". Flatterer.

Could it be our workshops, Lizzie? For example, at the start of 2010 we went back to basics, when in issue 53 Robert Chang revealed his ten best ways to become a better painter, while Jeremy Vickery taught us all how to better understand light and colour. These were ideas that we touched on later in the year, when in issue 60 James Gurney brought his wealth of knowledge to



## A WORLD OF WONDER

Up-and-coming fantasy artist Lauren K Cannon takes us behind the scenes at her studio, where she creates her deliciously surreal, macabre images.

**Page 22**



## MAKING MUSIC ON THE WEB

John Bergerud is the creator of The Futuristic Samurai DJ, which has become a deviantART phenomenon. We find out why his disc spinner is making noise online.

**Page 24**



## FLYING COLOURS

Artist Cassie Fuertez gives a fascinating insight into her working process on her blog, Clever Blue. Check out her work and more in Planet of the Arts.

**Page 26**

James Gurney investigated the intriguing science of visual perception in issue 60.



bear on his Science Behind Visual Perception workshop. "What we see has as much to do with our mind's eye as with what's out there in front of us," said James.

His workshop clearly had an effect on reader Keith Michael Parker, who says his highlights for 2010 were buying Painter 11 and subscribing to ImagineFX: "That and discovering James Gurney provided all the creative inspiration I could've asked for."

Forum regular Quetzal found inspiration in 2010 from going back to basics and reviving some of the core skills needed to improve. "Revisiting some of those basic painting notions helps to spot holes in your formation as an artist," says Quetzal. "Life is a lot like swimming upstream: if you stop moving forward you're automatically going backwards," says the pragmatic artist.

## SCI-FI BUZZ

In issue 53 we were lucky enough to interview Sparth, one of the finest new sci-fi artists on the scene, while issue 65 returned to the theme: it featured a stunning TRON-inspired cover by Marek Okon; a behind-the-scenes look at TRON: Legacy's vehicle design with Daniel Simon; and an A-Z of sci-fi tutorials from some of the world's best genre artists, including John Harris, Jim Burns and Andrew Probert, the man who

# COVER OF THE YEAR

We asked you to vote for your favourite – here are the top three from 2010



 "When Paul contacted me with the idea of a vampire cover, I was really thrilled. This subject was exactly what I would have loved to paint as a male character – very mysterious, dark, attractive and dangerous at the same time. As usual, ImagineFX gave me a lot of freedom, so I had loads of fun during the painting process, and I must admit I fell in love with this vampire!" **Mélanie Delon**



 "We changed our mind a lot while tackling this cover. The cheerleader took on a new pose every day. The haircut and her face were a challenge – trying to paint a sexy zombie isn't easy. The red colour is great and the team have done a good job on the typography." **Serge Birault**



 "My favourite part was the humour. I never get to produce cover art that reflects the humour I inject in my convention sketches, and I love beautiful women with personality. Nothing lets someone's personality shine through like comedy. Her hair is some of the best I've inked in a long while. And I inked it with markers, oddly enough!" **Adam Hughes**

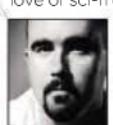


A is for alien: our celebration of influential sci-fi art included legendary figures such as Jim Burns.

designed the USS Enterprise and helped create Back to the Future's DeLorean.

"I've rediscovered my passion for sci-fi and fantasy artwork," says reader Alex Storer about his year with ImagineFX.

Likewise, reader Casey Callender found his love of sci-fi on our pages. "Sci-fi film and

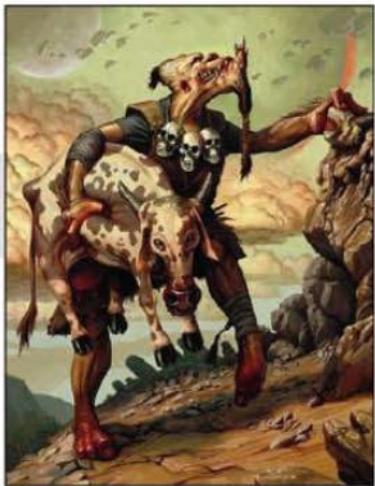
 comics is where I should focus my career, no matter the obstacles," says Casey, adding: "On that same note, I've learned to not give up on your dreams, be patient and work your fanny off. Learn to stay focused and stay positive, otherwise you become your own worst enemy when it comes to your career."

## SOFTWARE SURPRISES

The launch of Photoshop CS5 and ArtRage Pro 3 turned the year on its head. Our review of ArtRage 3.0 in issue 52, and workshop by Simon Dominic in issue 58, proved that the budget package was here to stay, while in issue 57, self-taught artist Marta Dahlig and tech expert Tom Dennis dug deeper into the latest version of Photoshop to see if the premium software really offered anything new. 2010 showed there's always something

you don't know. As reader JoeParis says bluntly, "There's still a long way to go."

But as forum moderator Kazky explains, her 2010



Simon Dominic's meaty ArtRage tutorial in issue 58 put this powerful painting tool through its paces.

➡ high proves you should stay positive. "I've learned that you can find the answer to any art-related question in the forum or in ImagineFX. There's that much knowledge available and always someone willing to help." She also has a thoughtful take on the importance of being part of a community: "I've learned that no matter what your skill level there's always someone who's looking at your artwork and hoping to reach your level." It's a sentiment echoed by reader Alex Tooth, who says he's found that in 2010 "looking at, enjoying and appreciating art is as important as creating it". He adds: "Don't get comfortable - always look for a new and difficult challenge."

That spirit of help and advice is what every issue of ImagineFX is based on. Reader Samantha Routhier says she discovered the potential of her Wacom in



Adobe Photoshop CS5 launched with a host of fresh tools for painters. We were impressed by the new brush options.

amazing artists", stating her 2010 high was discovering what Photoshop can do beyond photo touch-ups. "I discovered that I have a great appetite to create art, and ImagineFX is such an inspirational tool for me," she says. "I learned that I like my photographs to look like paintings and my paintings to look like photographs – what's that about?"

## A SLICE OF APPLE

2010 felt like the year digital art really took hold. The launch of Apple's iPad and software such as Brushes, Sketchbook Pro Mobile, and Adobe Ideas (also for iPod and iPhone) helped take the industry to new users. In issue 55 our team of experts – Steve Sprang, Brian Weaver and Kalaidjian – put the iPad through its paces, while in issue 60 Dreamworks' Goro Fujita created a workshop using Brushes. Many instantly fell

## DID YOU MISS...?

We pick five mag moments you may have overlooked



Our Clash of the Titans-themed issue featured many great artists, including Raymond Swanson and Donato Giancola, but Ray Harryhausen's original sketches for the movie really fired our imagination.



Esteemed manga writer Helen McCarthy traced the development of modern manga from street entertainment to high art in her eye-opening account of the popular Japanese art form.

## A-Z Fantasy Creatures | Issue 56



Artists as varied as Julie Bell, Brian Froud, Paul Bonner, John Howe, Simon Dominic and Dan Scott gathered to share their secrets for painting fantasy creatures. And we learned what a Kappa is.

**“I discovered that I have a great appetite to create art, and ImagineFX is an inspirational tool”** Jo Ann Schow



2010 after picking up a copy of ImagineFX. "I discovered a new workflow and learned how to paint without the line art," she says. "I'm on the way to discovering my own style and I'm loving every minute of it." Likewise, reader Alex Storer says he learned to cultivate his own style. "I'm constantly developing my Intuos and Photoshop techniques," he says. This focus has renewed Alex's love of digital art, and after spending the day with artist David Hardy he's "seriously started working on digital artwork, which has been very rewarding".

Likewise, Jo Ann Schow says she learned there's "amazing art produced digitally by

The release of Apple's iPad gave us a whole new medium on which to hone our illustration skills.

in love with the handheld devices. "The immediacy of whipping out my iPhone and making a quick sketch puts it on a par with paper sketchbooks, as far as I'm concerned," says Scott Melchionda, while Travis Boward agrees, saying: "I love mine and have seen

some truly amazing things come from Brushes and SketchBook Pro."

However, pencil and paper are preferable for many readers. "It's just too hard and unnatural without a stylus," says Andrew Hilton-Wig. And Alex Storer agrees: "I can't see the appeal of finger painting on an iPad." Ian McCaffrey is more blunt: "As useful as tits on a boar," he says. "Better off with paper and pencil."

Going back to traditional methods was a big theme in 2010. Interviews with Sorayama (issue 54), William Stout (issue 60) and Ken Kelly (issue 59) showed that the masters were still working hard. New artists, too,



# The year in review

were finding creative freedom in old methods. Speaking with artists such as Dan Scott (issue 52), Erik Jones (issue 57) and Tyler Jacobson (issue 62) proved you don't need to go digital to be successful.

"It's a trend readers were in on. 'I found a nice technique for colouring, got to my own style at last and started painting with traditional paints,' says Joanna Piechowiak. Kody Chamberlain relaunched PUNKS, 'a comic done entirely in cut-and-paste collage with an old photocopier, X-Acto blade, and a glue stick,' he says, adding: 'I'm definitely keeping it old school.'

Alfredo Lopez Jr says that he rediscovered oils after speaking with artists including Tom Baxa at Comic-Con. "I have a new-found love of them," he states. "Now



The stars of the *ImagineFX* Legends series in 2010 included the multi-talented Californian artist William Stout and fantasy illustrator Ken Kelly, who got his big break designing an album cover for – appropriately enough – rock legends KISS.



## Moebius interview | Issue 65

The rebellious French artist who inspired Star Wars and created 'adult comics' called us from Paris for a chat about his life. A genuinely humble genius who still gets creative block, just like all of us.

I've added several oil paintings to my portfolio and will be showing them at a couple of galleries over the next year."

## FRANKLY, AMAZING

Of course, we can't recall 2010 without remembering the passing of fantasy's finest traditional artist, Frank Frazetta. The artist who many cite as an inspiration and visionary died on 10 May, in Fort Myers, Florida, at the age of 82, and we paid tribute in issue 58. His legacy will always live on and continue to inspire. "I get a lot of inspiration from the use of line in his sketches," says Michael Steele, while Matthew Thomas Scibilia says: "His charm and magic were how easy it seemed for him to surgically remove our dreams and apply them to canvas with bold strokes of the most amazing colours and dynamic energy. He deserves the highest honours and respect for his contribution to our culture." It's a sentiment echoed by Thinus van Rooyen:



## Colin Fix's workshop | Issue 62



We asked the BioShock 2 artist to paint us a zombie workshop for our horror special; he came back with a decomposing gorilla. Colin's workshop was a masterclass in character design and custom textures.

**“I’ve learned you can find the answer to any art-related question in the forum”** Kazky



The passing of Frank Frazetta in May was a huge loss. He leaves behind a legacy of unforgettable artwork.



"Frazetta was a man who, though obviously well honed, understood these things in the same way we understand the sun comes up every morning. It was a natural instinct honed by years of dedication." The final word goes to Dave Dorman, who simply states that he "was the inspiration for my career".

While there was an element of sadness to 2010, overall it was a great year to be a digital artist and for anyone passionate about fantasy and sci-fi art. From hearing our readers' highlights of the year, everyone seems to have been inspired, informed and thrilled by the art community at large. Let's keep this going through 2011! ☺

## IMAGINEFX HIGHLIGHTS

*The magazine team pick their standout moments of 2010*

### Claire Howlett | Issue 61

My 2010 highlight was our search for digital art's new Rising Stars. We picked the ten most awe-inspiring artists out of hundreds of entries. I was proud to help promote emerging artists and we'll be continuing our search for new talent in 2011.

### Ian Dean | Issue 60

We're serious about art but we don't take ourselves too seriously, so the 2010 FIFA World Cup was a great chance to have a bit of fun. Our Fantasy Football competition turned out to be very popular, and the standard of entries was incredible.

### Paul Tysall | Issue 64

'The Art of Dungeons & Dragons' was another of *ImagineFX*'s well-researched features written with genuine passion. It really made me appreciate the heritage and influence this phenomenon had on so many fantasy artists.

### Clifford Hope | Issue 57

Drew Struzan's art has always enthralled me – and now there I was, editing his words. I remember feeling nervous as I tweaked the text, and a sense of relief when Drew wrote back saying what a good job we'd done. It was a pleasure, Drew.

### Beren Neale | Issue 61

I loved our cover competition. Going through hundreds of reader entries was both daunting and great fun – and being introduced to so many artists was rewarding. Christina Davis's winning piece is one of the strongest covers we've had all year!



## In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists



### Industry Character art

Disney is calling for digital art students to enter D&AD's Student Awards 2011. It's asked students to create a lead character for a narrative-driven comedy cartoon that'll appeal to children aged from four to 14. The deadline is Friday 4 March 2011. Find out more here: [bit.ly/9eqYP1](http://bit.ly/9eqYP1).



### Book Cloud busting

Celebrating the artistic visionaries that hail from New Zealand, Weta artist Paul Tobin has released a new art book, White Cloud Worlds, which is out now. With an introduction from filmmaker Guillermo Del Toro, the book is crammed with amazing art. You can have a look at the art and read an exclusive interview with Paul here: [www.imaginefx.com/wcw](http://www.imaginefx.com/wcw).

### Initiative All the nines

Dark fantasy artist Tom Baxa will be creating 99 fantasy paintings over 99 days, and selling the originals for \$99 (\$9.99 for prints). He'll also be discussing each

painting on his blog, where he hopes to explore new themes and techniques. This is day one's image. See the rest here: [www.baxaart.blogspot.com](http://www.baxaart.blogspot.com).



I work my traditional magic on this side of the room.



In the organiser bin are a utility knife, my collection of business cards from other artists, way too many scissors, pens and Sharpies!

I'm getting a bigger monitor very soon. This one's pathetic!



## Lauren K Cannon

**Catnaps** We explore Lauren's soft, cleanly lit art room that's home to her gang of cats



**My studio is a spacious spare room that I've mostly taken over. Up until spring of 2010, I'd been crammed into my bedroom and I didn't realise how much it was messing with my Feng Shui until I was able to move my work life into its own space.**

On the right side I've got my desktop, complete with an Intuos4 and a very tiny monitor I'm in the process of updating. Two other essentials for the digital artist: a Maxtor external drive that automatically backs up my files, and an ancient computer

battery that keeps me from losing work when the power flickers, which is annoyingly common in my area of New Jersey. I also have a small collection of art reference books on hand: colour theory, perspective, anatomy and animals, making this the usual artwork space, I guess.

I've got a big drafting table and space to set up an easel for acrylic and oil painting. I also have a great lighting set-up: blue halogen bulb in the desk lamp and incandescent bulbs in the corner. Together it's a very soft, clean light effect that's easy on tired eyes.

# Artist news, software & events

The two most important things in my life: my Intuos4 and my tea cup.

Putting my ImagineFX goodies to good use!



It may not look like much, but my cats and I fight over this chair constantly.

The wall is littered with art posters, postcards and Post-It notes with deadlines. Oh, and on the left is my prized signed print of my favourite fantasy painting ever: Donato Giancola's The Golden Rose. I love surrounding myself with other people's art. It's a great motivator.

My cats are regular visitors to my studio. I'm amazed that none of them have managed to creep into these photos. They sleep under the desk, they steal my chair, they knock my pencils over, they plant their furry butts smack in front of my keyboard... They haven't walked through wet paint yet, but it's only a matter of time.

**Lauren is a surreal fantasy artist who hails from a small woodland village in New Jersey, US. To see more of her distinctive work, visit [www.navate.com](http://www.navate.com).**

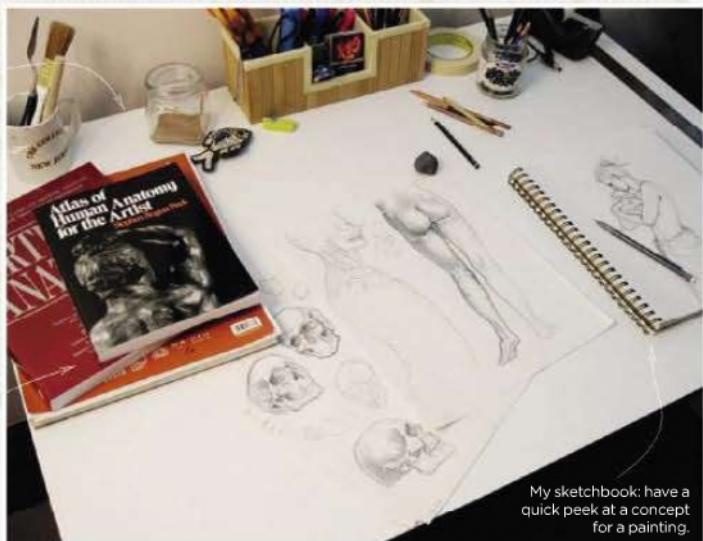
My drafting table is my traditional art area. Lately I've been doing a lot of anatomy practice.

A college mug contains glazing brushes and a palette knife. The jar that's next to it has oil thinner.

Two great anatomy books: *Atlas of Human Anatomy for the Artist* by Stephen Rogers Peck, and *Artistic Anatomy* by Dr Paul Richer.



The area next to my drafting table is where I keep all my traditional media nicely organised. Papers, mediums and dry media are on the shelf; my paints are in the little trunk. The plastic sheet protects the carpet.



My sketchbook: have a quick peek at a concept for a painting.



deviantART

## +deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



### Kendrick Lim

[kunkka.deviantart.com](http://kunkka.deviantart.com)

This Singapore-based concept artist isn't shy when it comes to combining bold colours for full emotive effect. He's also more than happy to experiment with techniques and styles, making each test image something bold and brilliant.



### Dan LuVisi

[adonihs.deviantart.com](http://adonihs.deviantart.com)

Among the beautiful chrome sci-fi characters that Dan LuVisi creates, you'll also find professional Kick Ass promo paintings and Batman fan art. This is the site of a versatile artist who always retains a love for his craft in each painting, whether an original concept or a bit of fun.



### Ismael Medrano

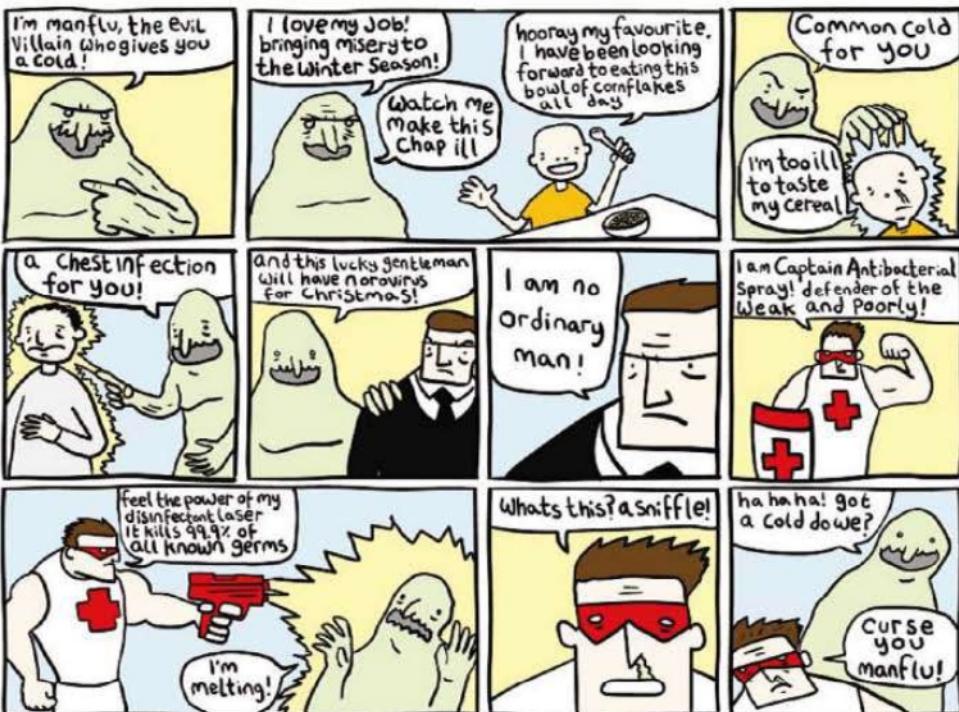
[ariokh.deviantart.com](http://ariokh.deviantart.com)

Ismael's humour is apparent in a lot of his artwork, but don't be put off by the apparent lack of seriousness. This US artist has a knack for capturing the essence of his weird and wonderful characters with a great corporeal style – just look at the amazing skin tones of his aliens and monsters.



## Life Is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce



## Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"I took him out of New York City and sent him to Scotland, so he couldn't simply swing away from a villain."

In Charles Vess's hands, Scotland's distinct lack of skyscrapers poses a problem for Spider-Man... See page 44

## Stop! Rewind!

**Shout out** A fantasy-themed DJ captures multiple imaginations on deviantART

**Taking stock of his first year on deviantART, John Bergerud was a little surprised with his page's popularity. To date, 1,100 fan art illustrations have been created based on his original Shwann universe characters, with a massive 320,000 page views in total – and all because of a Futuristic Samurai DJ.**

John came up with the Samurai DJ character while he was DJing, mainly in response to the generic look of DJs at the

time. "I didn't like the way all DJs seemed to be looking deep in thought or screaming into their headphones in photos. That's just not me," he says. "I wanted to create something that was unique in the DJing world."

John was pleased to find his characters entering other artist's creative process. "I love the fact that so many artists enjoy my original Shwann characters," he says.

Enter the Shwann universe: [shwann.deviantart.com](http://shwann.deviantart.com).



Phat tunes and razor-sharp katanas collide in the world of Shwann.

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## PLANET OF THE ARTS



HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: [PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM](mailto:PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM). CHEERS!

*Beren*

Beren Neale, Staff Writer



### ANTHONY JONES

Concept artist | US

**1** We're not sure what the 'robot' part of Anthony's Robotpencil blog refers to - it certainly isn't the style or technique of his paintings, which are anything but mechanical. [robotpencil.org](http://robotpencil.org)

### MIO DEL ROSARIO

Illustrator | US

**2** A background and layout artist in the animation industry, Mio has an eye for tone and little details that bring a piece together. Take a look at his current robotic cowboy series. [miocreates.blogspot.com](http://miocreates.blogspot.com)

### CASSIE FUERTEZ

Illustrator | US

**3** As a production artist for a web company, this is Cassie's space for her colouring work and original paintings. Each image is broken down to show the artist's working process. [cleverblue.blogspot.com](http://cleverblue.blogspot.com)

### YOKO FURUSHO

Illustrator | US

**4** As a self-proclaimed 'Japanese' illustrator in New York, Yoko is doing well for herself, with her drawings adorning several exhibition shows and even the occasional shoe. [blog.yokofurusho.com](http://blog.yokofurusho.com)

# Your fantasy art universe



## ETERNAL TWILIGHT 5

18-20 February 2011 | England

**5** Fans of Twilight rejoice, as the unofficial convention Eternal Twilight returns for a fifth year at Birmingham's NEC. There'll be plenty of guests, plus quizzes and parties.

[massiveevents.co.uk](http://massiveevents.co.uk)

## DIMITAR TZVETANOV

Concept artist | Bulgaria

**6** As a lead 3D artist at Haemimont Games, Dimitar puts a lot more 2D art on here than you'd expect. He's clearly got a passion for the dramatic scene – and it's contagious.

[artbychrom.com](http://artbychrom.com)

Map art by Jonny Duddle  
[www.duddleblog.com](http://www.duddleblog.com)

## SKETCH JAM

We visit Leeds OK Comics' Doodle-Booze gathering to check out their table drawings



### OK Comics

LOCATION: Nation of Shopkeepers, Leeds  
WHEN: Usually every month  
WEB: [on.fb.me/h3Dmvi](https://on.fb.me/h3Dmvi)



Here's a comic mix that's been started by Mark Johnson.



The artists draw on whatever they can find, including the tables.



Want fries with that? Jon Burney creates a comic image.

# Winners

## Image of the month

**Ramble on** Concept artist Carlos Jaugeon Perez takes us through some of the details of his nomadic family



Using SketchBook Pro for the line art and Photoshop for colouring, this image took Carlos three days to finish.



"I included a strict father, a mother who expresses security and leadership, and a scared and whimpering child," says Carlos.



When Carlos Perez took on the MYFX challenge Nomads, the first thing he thought of was a string of clichés. What's perhaps more surprising is that he decided to work with them in his final image. "I tried to make my nomadic family include several clichés," he explains, "so the image would have an immediacy."

His eye for detail went as far as what his characters were wearing. "The sherpas of Tibet gave me the idea of the big backpack," says Carlos, "and for the child I played with the idea of a homemade costume with a real bear skin."

**MYFX THEME:** Nomads

**WINNER:** Carlos Jaugeon Perez (Jgeon)

**GALLERY:** [www.imaginefx.com/jgeon](http://www.imaginefx.com/jgeon)

### FORUM CRIT



"Aside from doing a phenomenal job designing and rendering your characters, I'm most impressed with your construction, Carlos. Everything has such amazing structure, and all your details fit into clear, well-designed silhouettes."

**Varuna Daresbourg (Adventuregoat)**



**MYFX THEME:** Orc Refugee Camp

**WINNER:** Alex Tooth (AlexTooth)

**GALLERY:** [www.imaginefx.com/alextooth](http://www.imaginefx.com/alextooth)



"I really wanted to show the exiled Orcs' plight and design a mean, hostile environment in this challenge - and I think that I succeeded. It's somewhere no-one would want to end up in the wake of a large-scale crisis, let alone spend the rest of their days!"

**MYFX THEME:** Pumpkin Patch Kids

**WINNER:** Alex Tooth (AlexTooth)

**GALLERY:** [www.imaginefx.com/alextooth](http://www.imaginefx.com/alextooth)



"I read the challenge and thought it would be a good opportunity to take a break from fantasy stuff and try something fun. I liked the idea that it was an advert for a video game, and this gave me a chance to create a bold composition and design some fun characters."



**Join in!**  
[www.imaginefx.com/myfx](http://www.imaginefx.com/myfx)

**MYFX THEME:** Lieutenant Uhuruwl

**WINNER:** Charlotte Ahlgren (voluspa)

**GALLERY:** [www.imaginefx.com/voluspa](http://www.imaginefx.com/voluspa)



"I wanted to make a character that would go well with [forum user] em... 's previous winner, Captain Quack, and studied his picture - in particular for the lighting. It was a good learning experience!"

**MYFX THEME:** From Ancient China

**WINNER:** Ciaran Lucas (charco)

**GALLERY:** [www.imaginefx.com/charco](http://www.imaginefx.com/charco)



"When I heard the title of this challenge, I jumped at the chance to play with designs for a baby dragon. I wanted to portray something cute and cuddly, but potentially dangerous."



# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on [claire@imaginefx.com](mailto:claire@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



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Readers come to the defence of Serge Birault's cover pin-ups from issues 54 (for subscribers) and 62.

### Soft porn? You're kidding

I take very strong exception to the "objectify and dehumanise women" comments that Laura Hutton made in regard to the covers of issues 54 and 62 [Letters, issue 64]. Exactly how did those two images turn ImagineFX into "soft pornography"? Laura dear, they're called pin-ups for a reason and if you read the issue that featured the pin-ups, you'd know that's exactly what the art for cover 54 was supposed to be!

Sci-fi and fantasy art does, on occasion, exaggerate and distort poses. I didn't hear her complaining about the Frank Frazetta art you featured in one issue and those women are definitely barely dressed and significantly enhanced in the chest!

I find the images fun and instructional: there's nothing objectionable or dehumanising about them, and I'm female. It's an art magazine. No one's forcing you to read it and no one's forcing you to buy it. And your younger siblings have probably seen a lot more that dehumanises women on TV than they can find in ImagineFX.

**Mel Staffeld, US**

I read the letter from Laura Hutton in issue 64 about her aversion to the two pin-up-

style covers by Serge Birault. I have to say that I wholeheartedly disagree with her, as in fact those two are my favourite covers! As an artist and as a woman, I love Serge's quirky, distorted style and humorous renditions of two beautiful, alluring women. If I'm supposed to be feeling dehumanised and objectified, something went wrong when these covers got to me!

While I agree that there have been an evenly distributed selection of male and female characters, I have to admit that I look forward to the female ones more than male. I think Laura's accusation that you fail to appeal to half of the market with these is completely incorrect. Everyone I've asked (male or female) whether or not they feel at all that those covers objectified women has disagreed entirely.

I hope that ImagineFX continues to produce the wonderfully illustrated fantasy females in issues to come.

**Claire Jones, Australia**

**Claire replies** Thanks for your views, Mel and Claire. I'd be very interested in hearing from other readers about the subject. Who do you agree with on this issue?

### Pots of knowledge

I've been a subscriber since issue 25, although I've been buying the magazine since about issue 11. Since starting to read ImagineFX I've moved house four times and the magazine is one of the things that I always make sure moves with me. Recently, I've been really stressed since I've been starting my own pottery studio, so I decided to dig out my old copies of ImagineFX. Reading through the issues was like meeting old friends again, revisiting the articles that inspired me and made me want to get better at drawing and painting.

I got up to issue 34 and saw that it was Rob's last issue, so I then searched through the living room for issue 35, Claire's first

issue. Then I checked what issue last came through my door: number 64. So, congratulations are in order for Claire and her 30th issue.

**Joseph Travis, England**

**Claire replies** Thirty issues as editor? I didn't realise! Time flies when you're having fun. It's great to hear that you're still holding on to copies of ImagineFX and treat them like old friends. I feel the same when I look back over previous issues.

### DID YOU MISS ISSUE 65?

We've still got a few copies, but hurry! Turn to page 77 and order one today.

Reader Claire sent us this image of a fantasy female from her portfolio.



Our star letter writer wins a dA Premium Membership!

- Browse more content more quickly
- Customise your profile page
- Receive exclusive discounts & offers
- And more!

### Scouting for girls

I've been a reader since about issue 19. At that time I was working as a retoucher, and I was so inspired by ImagineFX that I used to stay at work using the office Wacom to paint images at the end of the day. I continued illustrating and animating in my free time, and picked up an odd freelance job or two, but not enough to quit my day job. My lucky break came when I tried to flirt with a girl on the bus, telling her I was a freelance Flash artist and animator. I never got the girl, but a programmer happened to be eavesdropping and offered me a job working on games!

After working for the guy from the bus, we released a game, and off the success of that I've been lucky enough to make the position of art director for a very small independent casual games company, Comic Book RPGs, ([www.comicbookrpgs.com](http://www.comicbookrpgs.com)). Our first game is called Immortal Souls, which is about vampires. I found your issue on vampires handy because I was designing characters at that point.

ImagineFX has provided me with such a wealth of artistic and professional tips over the years, so I just want to thank you for keeping me on track.

**James O'Reilly,  
via email**

**Claire replies** So you got a job after trying to impress a girl? Funny! Best wishes on the game's success. (PS What happened to her?)



James was inspired by images like this one by Anne Stokes from our vampire issue.

# HOW TO DRAW AND PAINT

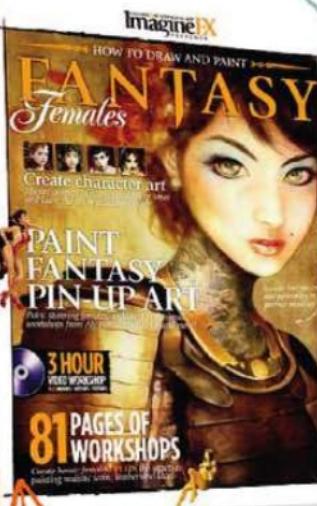
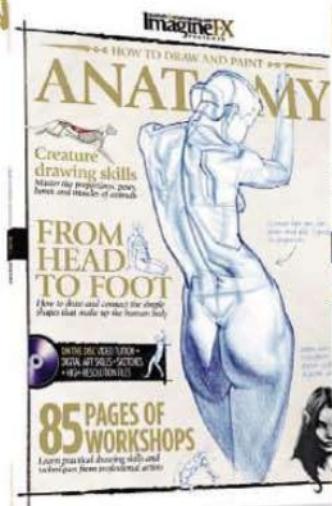
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aspect ratio display runs at 2560 x 1600 resolution. With over 1.07 billion displayable colours and 100,000:1 dynamic contrast ratio - not to mention a razor-sharp 7ms response time - it's the perfect display for incredibly detailed images and fast-moving video alike.

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Capacitive Touch Control delivers effortless, intuitive adjustment, and the UltraSharp range delivers class-leading energy efficiency and connectivity with all the ports you could ever need: DisplayPort, twin HDMI 1.3 and twin DVI-D connectors

with HDCP support, four USB ports, component connectors and an integrated 7 in 1 media reader. There's also a power connector for Dell's Soundbar, a stylish speaker system that delivers crystal-clear audio and full, rich bass.

UltraSharp monitors also come with Dell's exceptional support services, which include the Dell Premium Panel Guarantee: should even one bright defective pixel turn up during the warranty period, Dell will replace the entire display.

### Be creative in comfort

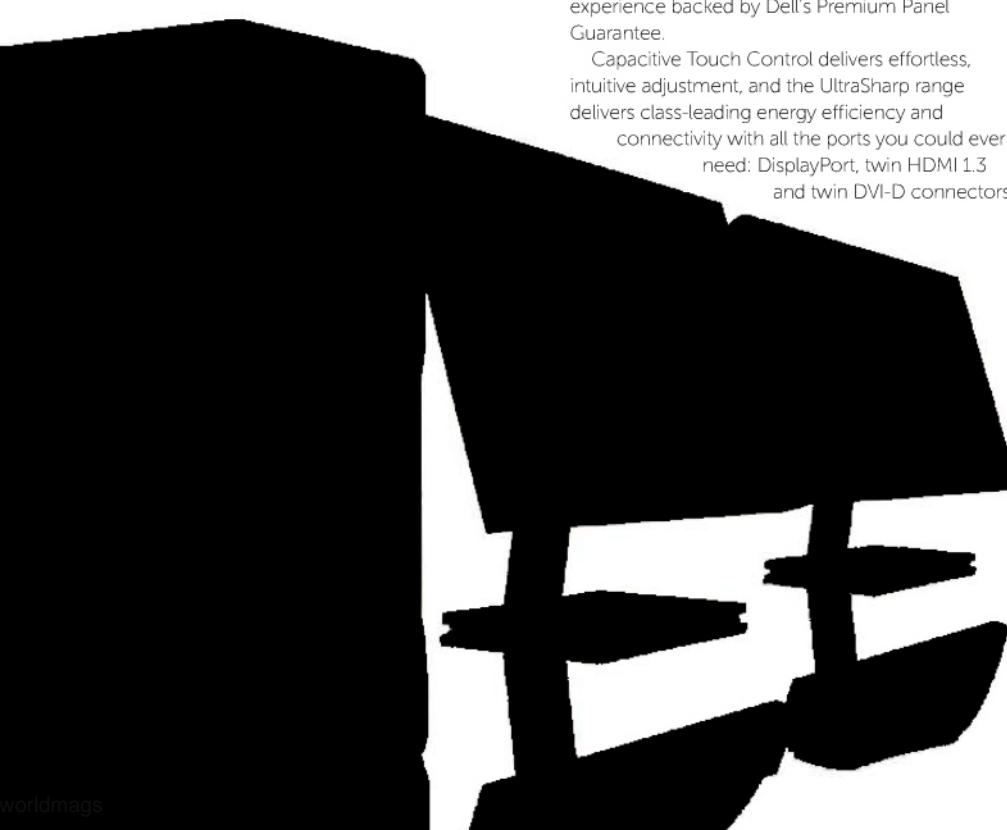
The perfect display isn't just about having superb hardware: it's about comfort too. Dell offers a wide range of useful, ergonomic display accessories from wall mounting kits and articulated arms to twin, triple and even quad-monitor stands for perfect positioning. No detail is too small: Dell can even provide document holders that keep your desk clear and your scribbles, source material or specifications at eye level.

If you're interested in running multiple monitors from a single DisplayPort connector - such as the ones you'll find in Dell Optiplex PCs, Dell Precision workstations and Dell Latitude notebooks - the enormously clever MMH11 Multi-Monitor Hub offers plug and play multi-monitor viewing, supports up to three displays and enables you to dedicate each monitor to a separate application.

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## Insider story

Michael Wrightson, Director of Operations, Prime Focus, UK. [www.primefocusworld.com](http://www.primefocusworld.com)

Prime Focus are market leaders in stereoscopic 3D conversion, with a track record predating the 3D boom and a CV including Avatar, Resident Evil: Afterlife and The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the DawnTreader (pictured) using the firm's own View-D™ conversion software. "Dell has continually demonstrated their understanding of our business requirements and their ability to deliver on the latest technology trends," Wrightson says. "Whether it is a single laptop for a producer or 100 precision T7500 workstations for a feature film, we receive the same high level of service."

"We choose workstations that can keep up with the high demands during the creation of VFX and 3D Stereoscopic films," Wrightson says.

"At the top of the list of features has to be reliability, which is especially important in the final stages of project delivery: any slowdown of performance or system failures can have a major impact on our ability to deliver to often extremely tight deadlines."

Why does Wrightson think 3D's become such a big deal? "It's the biggest leap forward in entertainment technology since the advent of colour film or surround sound," he says. "It delivers another dimension of immersion for the audience... we're in the middle of a genuine paradigm shift, and to me that is extremely exciting."



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**Andrew Jones, concept artist, Massive Black Inc**



"ImagineFX is a unique resource for the science-fiction and fantasy community. It has invaluable tips and techniques for a range of software, and encourages aspiring artists to get their work in print and receive international exposure."

**Jonny Duddle, freelance artist**

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# Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US  
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## Mélanie Delon



Mélanie is a freelance fantasy illustrator. She works as a cover artist for several publishing houses, and on her personal artbook series.

[www.melaniedelon.com](http://www.melaniedelon.com)

## Lauren K Cannon



Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

[www.navate.com](http://www.navate.com)

## Fiona Staples



Fiona has been a comic book artist since graduating from the Alberta College of Art & Design in 2006. She lives in Calgary, Canada.

[www.fionastaples.com](http://www.fionastaples.com)

## Manon



Manon is a freelance artist who specialises in fantasy, horror and portraiture. She enjoys painting drooling beasties and cute creatures.

[www.artbymanon.com](http://www.artbymanon.com)

## Brynn Metheney



Brynn was raised in the Mojave desert and moved to the Bay Area in 2006. Creature and animal illustrations are her forte.

[www.brynnart.com](http://www.brynnart.com)

## Stefan Kopinski



Stefan works primarily for the games industry, helping to realise weird and wonderful ideas from the minds of companies around the world.

[www.stefankopinski.com](http://www.stefankopinski.com)

## Jonathan Standing



Jonathan is an English artist and illustrator. He's based near Toronto, Canada, and works for a developer in the video games industry.

[www.jonathanstanding.com](http://www.jonathanstanding.com)

## Question

How do I use colour to attract attention?

*Paije Mantel, US*

Full-size  
Q&A images  
are on your  
DVD



As well as using a split complementary colour scheme, I employ a thirds composition and hint at converging lines to form a central focal point.

## Answer

Stefan replies



The use of contrasting hues draws the viewer into a colour image in much the same way as contrasting tones work in a grayscale image. Complementary shades – ones that sit opposite each other on a colour wheel – are inherently also contrasting.

Here I use a predominantly blue/grey, neutral background, with the light source hidden behind the main focal point. This immediately produces a bold silhouette with high tonal contrast. Having made the hue of the background light source harmonious with the rest of the background, I then use a complementary colour for the projected light of the robot, forming a split complementary colour scheme and drawing attention to the singular opposing hues. These

two devices produce a strong focal point with which an onlooker can engage with the image.

Warm colours tend to sit forward or appear more active than cool ones, which are more likely to recede in a picture. A simple way of gathering all the contrasting opposites in Photoshop is to have the top layer as an Inverted Adjustment Layer.

## Artist's secret

### DESIGN A COLOUR SCHEME

Here you can see the complementary colours with a simple inverted Adjustment Layer placed as the top layer. I've also included a colour wheel to help you visualise each hue.



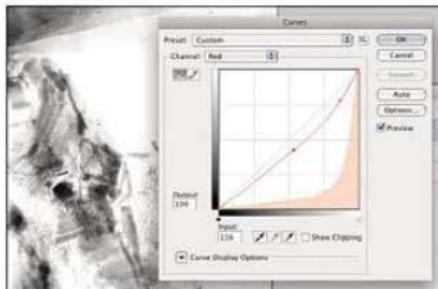
## Step-by-step: Using colour to make a painting pop



**1** The background is worked up from a texture with neutral, harmonious hues laid on top in washes. The darker area of the ground is worked over with similar tones as the top layer, this being a dust layer that emphasises the focal point.



**2** Now I introduce the contrasting block shapes of the main subject. Keeping these dark not only separates them from the neutral greys of the background, but also helps form a greater schism, ready for the complementary reds that follow.



**3** Add reds to the focal point and hint at them in the foreground dust to pull it out from the background. A Curve Adjustment Layer boosts the combined contrasts as well as the beams of light.

## Question

It is possible to depict complex mechanical parts without spending hours drawing them?

Matt Dickson, Australia



I don't worry about whether or not the engine would really work, as long as it looks as though it could.

## Answer

Jonathan replies

In a word, yes. Provided you're not making a production drawing that a modeller will have to construct something from, then it's possible to make machinery look convincing without having to undertake the necessary laborious research of working out how it might function.

What is essential, however, is taking a look at pictures of machinery to see what sorts of shapes and colours are in there. For example, if you're painting a giant robot and making an elbow or knee joint, then you needn't design something that's totally functional. However, the general shape of the joint should look as though it has some way to bend or swivel; try to hint at the practical nature, rather than spell it out for the viewer. If you can also simplify the areas of

the design that surround the more complicated mechanical parts, then the detail that you layer into the moving components will usually look more convincing.

The trick when rendering fictional machinery is to fool the eye by presenting it with simple shapes to compare to the more detailed areas, meaning that you imply complexity rather than literally drawing or painting it out.



I deliberately keep the motorcycle's chassis simple to play up the contrast with the machinery, making it seem more complex than it really is.

# ImagineNation Artist Q&A

## Question

Is there an easy way to show reflections in windows?

Keerthi Lou, Singapore

## Answer

Lauren replies

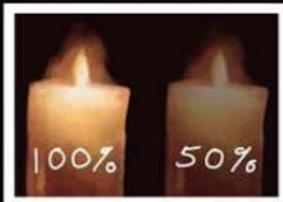


You can't simply flip the object into the window, unless the object is being reflected at a precise symmetrical angle. There are a few techniques you can employ to make reflections easier to paint, but you'll have to do some extra painting in the process.

Reflections depend a lot on light. A well-lit room will reflect strongly on a window pane at night, but less so during the day, unless parts of it are in direct sunlight. Otherwise, reflections will be much more subdued. Even the strongest reflections are going to share a few key characteristics: muted colour, lower contrast, a lack of detail and a degree of transparency. You may also find fuzzy or even double edges because of the construction of the window's panes, but unless you're getting up close and personal I wouldn't worry about that detail too much.

It's much easier to paint reflections if you create them on a new layer. This enables you to render first, and worry about the details later. Then it's easy to adjust the Layer Opacity, tweak colour sliders, blur edges and even fix the perspective or placement of the reflection on the window. And speaking of perspective, remember that space and distance get reflected, too. This is a small detail that's easy to overlook, but will bring a lot of extra realism to the image if handled properly.

There's no quick fix for creating a reflection, but small clues like loss of detail, muted colours and transparency easily create the illusion.



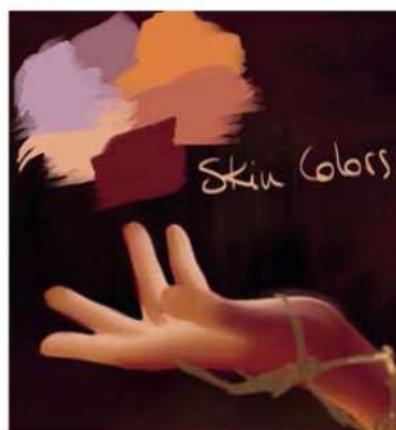
If you find reflections challenging, paint the reflection on a separate layer to make it easier to control the opacity.



## Question

How should I paint skin that looks light and translucent?

Pascal Marlow, England



Here's an example of a skin colour scheme. I use the orange for the thinner parts of the hand to emphasise the translucent effect.



The light isn't pure white here – I choose a very light pink and mix it with a pale mauve to add brightness to the hand.

## Answer

Mélanie replies



The secret here lies in the colour scheme. Skin is never only pink or beige, light is never pure white and shadows are never black. To achieve the effect that a bright colour has on skin you have to mix different colours.

The best way to understand this is to study it from real life: you'll notice that skin is composed of myriad colours, such as green, yellow and even blue for the lights, while violet, gold, brown or red make up the shadows. The hardest part of the solution is finding the balance between those colours.

Translucent skin is exactly the same: you need to play with saturated colours such as orange, red or yellow to simulate the thinness of the skin, to achieve the right effect. So don't be afraid to use those tones – just add them on a separate layer to see if they work or not.

## Question

Is there a technique to painting big, cute, boggly 'gremlin' eyes? *Ryan Kurtz, US*

## Answer

Manon replies



When the words 'cute' and 'gremlin' come together, the only answer is a Mogwai from the classic Gremlins films. Before their transformation into scaly trouble-makers, these little chaps are seriously adorable. The term gremlins came from pilots in World War II blaming their faulty aircraft on creatures fiddling about with the wiring of their plane. Of course you can draw a gremlin as however you'd

like to imagine one, but here you'll see the recognisable star of the movies.

I want him to look super cute so I have made him smiley and his ears lopsided. For cute eyes, you want to stick to big pupils. The smaller the pupils, the more 'evil' the little fella will look. Use online references to get the glossy look that eyeballs possess. Finish your gremlin off with lots of reflective light to imply a glassy wet sheen and it'll enhance the cute factor of his eyes.

## Question

**How do I create a sense of speed in my art?**

Jo Bevan, England

## Answer

Stefan replies



The use of Photoshop's Motion Blur tool is the obvious way to create a sense of speed in a painting. However, it mustn't be solely relied upon. Often, too much blurring will obscure valuable detail in the image – detail that might add to either the storytelling or depth of your painting.

The key focal point of this image is kept crisp and focused as if you were following it, with only a small part blurred to highlight the fastest moving area. This not only enhances the sense of speed, but also helps settle the figure into the background. Similarly, keeping a little of the focus around the figure, namely the ground directly beneath, will also help the depth of field.

The pose of the subject conveys a sense of potential energy and power. Here I use both arms to give a pendulous feel, and have accentuated the lean or camber of the pose. I need to keep the figure upright compositionally, which means tilting the horizon. This introduces a feeling of instability to the viewer, which in turn supports the fact that the main figure is in full flight.

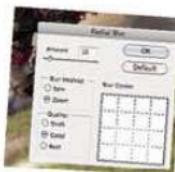
I use a Zoom Blur on a duplicated layer of the background, working with a layer mask that enables areas of focus to be pulled out.



### Artist's secret

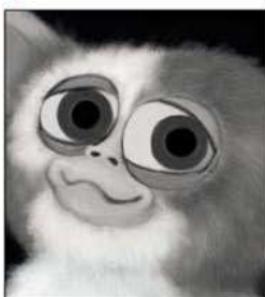
#### REFINE THE ZOOM BLUR

When using Photoshop's Zoom Blur, make sure you adjust the horizon on the filter's Blur Centre settings accordingly, and use several smaller blurs to achieve controlled results by using the shortcut Cmd+F (Mac) or Ctrl+F (PC) once one level of the blur has been produced.



## Step-by-step: Paint the eyes of an adorable, fantasy creature

- 1 The first step is to design my character. Mischief is his game and so I make him look as cheeky and mischievous as possible



– leave all that malevolence to his evil alter ego. I concentrate on the big eyes and keep the nose small in comparison, which adds to the levels of cuteness.

- 2 I then add the colour and details to my gremlin. Remember not to make the whites of the eyes completely white –



they need to be off-white or you won't be able to add any shine later. The whites of eyes are never actually white – your online searches will confirm this.

- 3 I can now go to town on the gloss and shine of the eyes. This is the fun bit of the painting process! I start with a translucent grey glint near the pupil, then over the top of that I introduce brighter white lights and dot them around the waterline of the lower eye lid to add moisture.



translucent grey glint near the pupil, then over the top of that I introduce brighter white lights and dot them around the waterline of the lower eye lid to add moisture.

# ImagineNation Artist Q&A

## Question

**What advice can you provide for painting my character's hair?**

Valentine Moreau, France

## Answer

Mélanie replies



The most important thing to do is to think about the general appearance of the hair, which should suit the character's face.

I always sketch different haircuts before settling on the right one. You must also consider the nature of the hair: is it curly or straight, thin or heavy?

Once you've decided on the hair type you can establish the colour scheme. I always start with a mid tone; it's easier to add light and shadows onto one. Don't forget that hair is reflective – it's affected by the environment's light and colours, so don't hesitate to add, for example, some touches of blue if the character is outside. This will add to the realism of the piece.

Regarding the details and the texture, I always paint the base with a basic hard round edge set to a large diameter. This helps to achieve the general shape of the hair. Then I switch to a custom spackled brush to work the strands and the primary details. Once I'm happy with the whole

thing I can focus on specific areas and add details where appropriate. I never overwork and texture the entire head of hair.

The extra details will give the hair a realistic look. I play with the Transfer brush settings to increase the colour variations and level of detail.



## Step-by-step: Creating a unique hairstyle



**1** I start the painting process by choosing the shape and basic colour of the character's hair. You can see the main strands that will inject a natural and realistic look to the haircut. I use a very large brush; I don't want to lose myself in the details at this stage, so I keep everything very simple for the moment.



**3** It's time to work in the details and the texture of the hair. For this stage I use a spackled brush and a basic round edge set to dynamic shape for the tiny details. I select a strand (ideally one that's near the focal point of the piece, where I want to attract the eye) and carefully paint a few lengths of hair.



**2** I'm now refining the strands, giving them an appealing look and shape. The hair of this character is wavy and so the curves need to be soft and light. The main light will come from above the top of her head, which means I must increase the lighting on this specific area and add more shadows on the bottom.



**4** I repeat the techniques from previous step in areas of the character's hair where I want details to be visible, and then add dots of light on those particular strands, to make them stand out that much more. I also apply soft brush strokes with the spackled brush to add more refinement to the hair.

## Question

**How do I paint glowing underwater creatures?**

Holly Sneddon, New Zealand

## Answer

Lauren replies



Glowing underwater creatures aren't so different from the glow effects found above ground. The main difference is that the light will diffuse slightly differently underwater. Furthermore, naturally glowing creatures experience different degrees of bioluminescence. Some have an overall glow to them; others only have parts of their bodies that are affected. I encourage you to do some research: even if you're creating a fantasy beast, sea creatures are outright unearthly at times and can be excellent inspiration as well as reference material.

As for the glow itself, the trick is to nail the colour and value. No matter how bright the glow is, try to avoid plain white. Even the brightest points should be tinted with colour, and the area around the brightest part should be a saturated colour bleed. This is the trick to painting convincing lighting effects. Lights

Combining bioluminescence and underwater creatures is a great play of drama and imagination for any image.



and glows don't just comprise brightness; they involve colour and saturation as well. Achieving the colour diffusion will create a much more convincing glow effect.

You can use a soft edged brush for the glow, but I prefer to use a spackled brush and slowly build up layers of low-opacity colours on multiple layers. The result is a little richer and textural in my opinion. The glow should permeate into the water and gently overlap the creature in places. You can use the colour of the water itself to help create additional contrast in the image.

Using a saturated colour bleed around the core of the light source will give the glow effect greater depth.



## Question

**Got any ideas for simplifying a complex image of a giant crab?**

Wido Hirsch, Germany

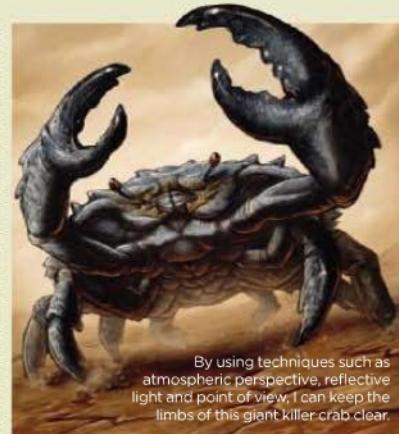
## Answer

Brynn replies



Creating a clear image is priority when it comes to illustration. For a detailed piece involving a giant killer crab there are a few tricks you can employ to keep things simple.

The angle at which the viewer looks at the crab from is important. I want to give the impression of scale so I've kept the point of view low to the ground. This also keeps the claws above the body and silhouetted against the sky to keep them clear and more dramatic. Atmospheric perspective helps with depth and pushes the legs back into space. Simplifying the legs, almost to a silhouette, will help in keeping them from looking too jumbled.



By using techniques such as atmospheric perspective, reflective light and point of view, I can keep the limbs of this giant killer crab clear.

Meanwhile, a reflective light along the bottom of the body helps to add definition to shadow areas. Finally, I add a few quick details: these can really make an image pop and keep things clear for the viewer.

## Question

**Any tips on painting tentacles?**

John Hobbs, Scotland

## Answer

Fiona replies



For octopus or squid tentacles, I'd recommend taking the time to paint on each individual sucker. Don't forget to give them dimension – each one is a little cylinder stuck to the arm. This may sound painstaking, but you can paint it pretty roughly and still achieve a good effect. You can see my process in this image: I start by blocking in the shape of each arm, then paint on white circles for the suckers, and then go in with a smaller brush to add definition.

In sci-fi you see a lot of beasts with smooth, shiny tentacles that can be fun to paint. But if you look at a real octopus, you'll notice their skin is bumpy and wrinkly. I find this look



From rough to finished, with a watercolour texture laid over top for kicks.

much grosser – in a good way – so I give my tentacles some creases in the skin. This can be done by lightly hatching with a textured brush.

The good news is that if you're painting a lot of tentacles then you don't need to give them all the same level of detail. Just go all-out on the parts that are in the foreground, and fake it the farther away they are from the viewer.

# ImagineNation Artist Q&A

## Question

**How can I pose a female barbarian to make her look tough, but not masculine?**

*Shelly Dominic, US*

## Answer

**Manon replies**



To make sure that I haven't made my female barbarian too manly, I've been careful to give her a dangerously curvaceous body that could in no way be mistaken for a man's. She's powerful looking without being all ripped abs and veiny muscles. I've also given her a few rolls of flesh here and there to draw attention to her curves and round tummy. It doesn't hurt to get the cleavage out in a hand-sewn leather bra, either. So what if it's impractical if it looks good, right? One thing that separates men from women is that the latter tend to carry more body fat, and, of course, it collects in specific areas!

The great thing about fantasy is that anything is possible. I decided to pose my woman at

By bringing what makes a woman womanly to the fore, I was able to pose my barbarian in a strong way and still have her look feminine.

the end of a long battle with a great beast. What better way to show off how tough you are than to lean nonchalantly against your latest kill? Everything is implied here – she's still sweaty, spattered with blood and holding a large, battle-scarred axe. Other little touches I've added are her necklace, made of the teeth of previous victims, and swords she's used in the midst of battle that are now embedded firmly into the head of the dragon.

Think sassy, think killer curves and think defiance. A barbarian babe isn't going to take any prisoners. Also, remember never to be afraid to use reference.

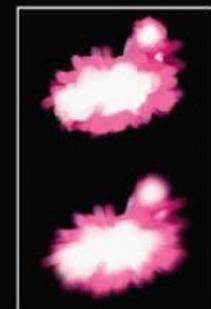
Fantasy art is all the more striking if you can make it look like it could be real.



## Question

**What's the best way to draw superhero-style power blasts?**

*Mark Bronson, Australia*



The Radial Blur filter: not just for speed lines.



Generic Lass owes her laser powers to a few simple Photoshop tricks.

## Answer

**Fiona replies**



I can show you a relatively quick, simple method of drawing power blasts in Photoshop. However, as with many things in art, there's no single technique that will work for every situation. I encourage you to run with this, improvise and figure out what works best for your superhero's powers and your art style.

For this piece I start by drawing hot-pink laser lines coming from the heroine's eyes on a new layer. To make the lines glow, I copy the layer, apply a Motion Blur filter to it and set the blurry layer to Linear Dodge. Then I use the Dodge tool on the original layer to brighten the laser lines to a bright white, where they terminate. This not only adds flashiness, but also helps guide the eye down to the blast.

On a new layer, I quickly paint in a blobby explosion with a large, textured brush. I select the blob, making sure it's centred within the Marquee, and apply the Radial Blur filter to give it that eye-searing, explosive look. Then I go in with a smaller brush, just to add a bit more definition to some areas and throw in some flying sparks.

As a subtle way to enhance your colours, create a new layer and set it to Colour. Drop in some low-opacity Radial Gradients near light sources. For example, here I add in some pink gradients near the blast and around the woman's face and eyes.

**Next month**  
**ON SALE: 8 February**  
**How can I create a brush**  
**for painting foliage?**

## Question

How do I paint an aged, decorative wall and still keep everything readable?

Nicky Turnbull, US

## Answer

Jonathan replies

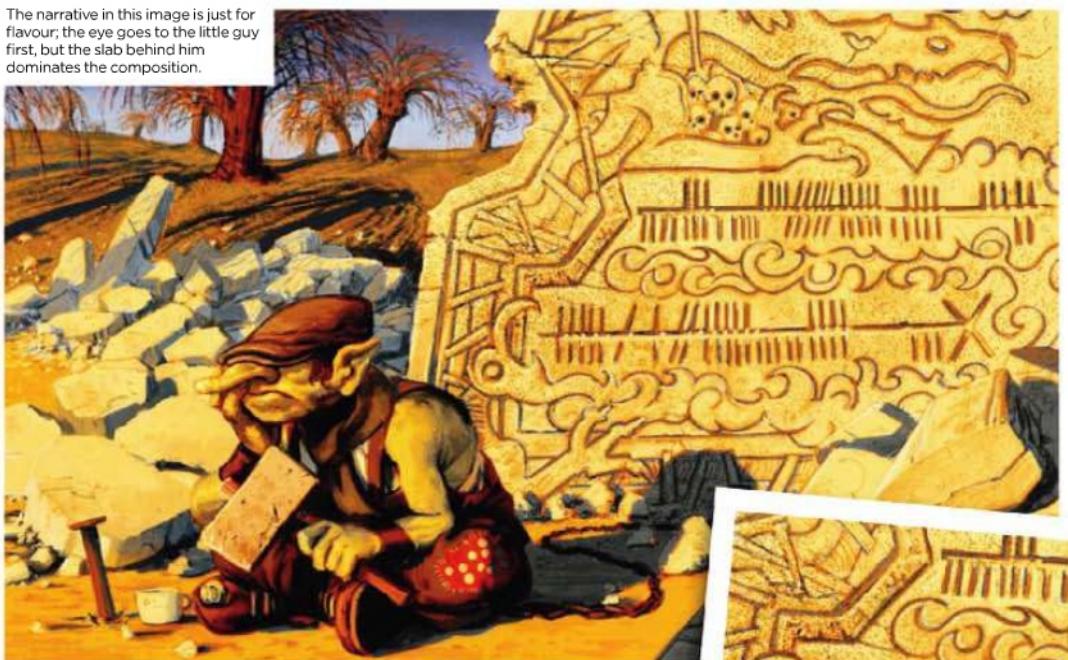


How aged and decorative you make your wall is relative, of course. Any stone surface will wear down and become smooth over time if it's exposed to the weather. Think carefully about the context for the wall: if it's sealed in an underground tomb, chances are it will have aged well. If it's lying directly at the bottom of a waterfall, it's going to have eroded much faster.

What I've tried to do here is be conscious of how I light the scene. Choosing to set it at sunset gives me contrast in tones as well as colours, increasing my chances of making the symbols and lettering as clear as possible. I add in local texture, colour and some cracks into the stone, making the design quite busy but still readable.

The complementary colours of the orange and cool grey clearly delineate the markings in the stone. I also make the

The narrative in this image is just for flavour; the eye goes to the little guy first, but the slab behind him dominates the composition.



iconography different from the lettering; the words are in Ogham text, plus one additional character in English (there's no 'X' in Ogham). Do you know what it says?

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The clarity of the inscriptions are boosted by both the tonal and colour contrast.



## Step-by-step: Making your ancient carvings stand out

**1** I begin with a thumbnail in which I block in shapes. I enlarge it and reduce its opacity in Photoshop, then print it on basic paper stock. I make this tight drawing on the printout and then scan it back in.



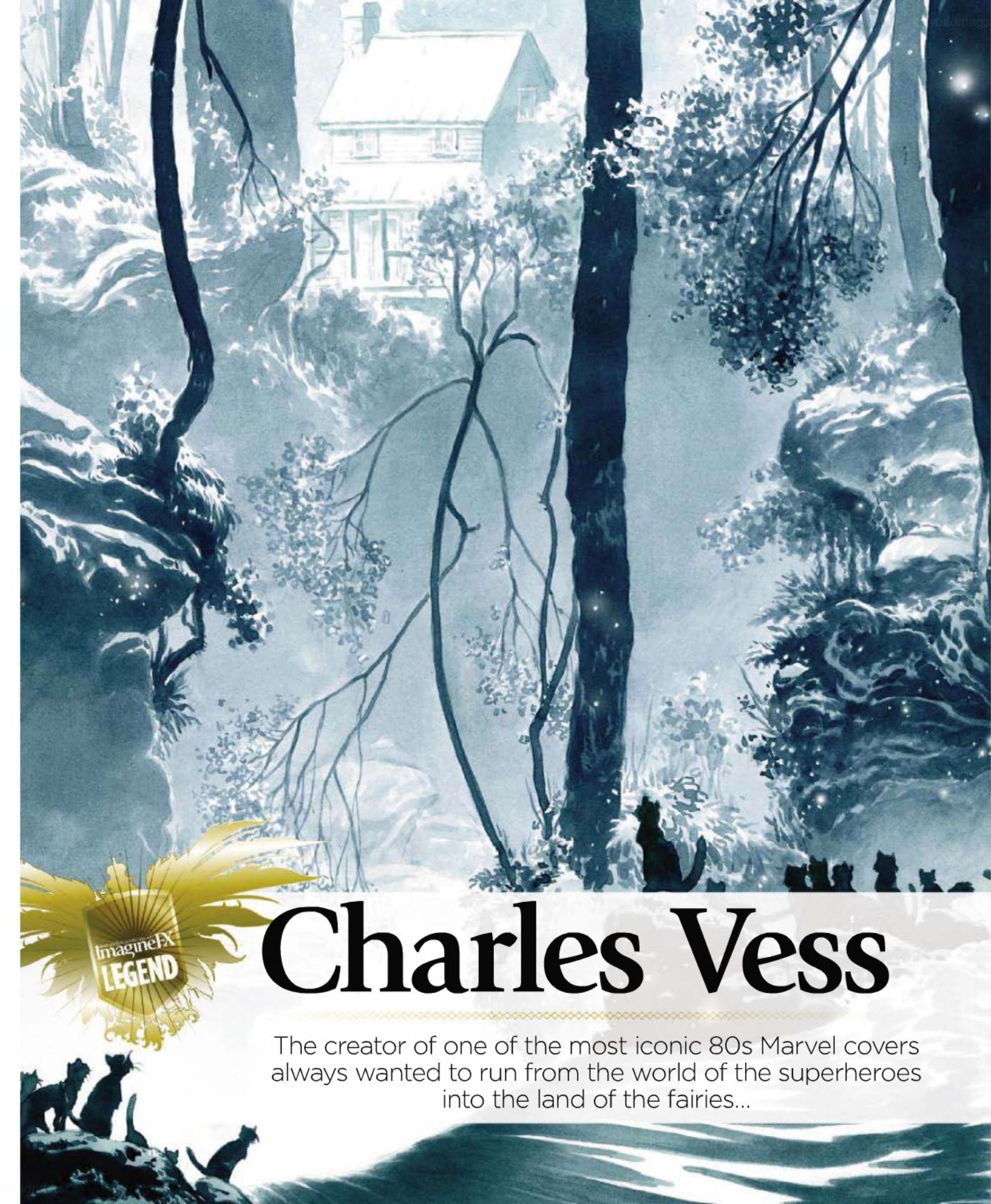
**2** I lay in tones and, using a Multiply layer, begin working out my lighting scheme. The more thought that goes into the illumination when working in tones, the easier colour is to manage.



**3** Using an Overlay layer, I add colour to the image. The hue contrast that I go with doesn't match the intensity needed to articulate the lighting at this time of day, so I boost the saturation in the low values.



**Got a digital art problem?** Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at [help@imaginefx.com](mailto:help@imaginefx.com) or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**



# Charles Vess

The creator of one of the most iconic 80s Marvel covers always wanted to run from the world of the superheroes into the land of the fairies...



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**LEGEND**



**C**

Charles Vess is laughing. Having just arrived home from a trip encompassing two conventions and an exhibition at the Galerie Daniel Maghen in Paris, he has plenty of cause to feel happy. "It was right on the Seine," he says. "You could walk outside the gallery with a glass of champagne and toast Notre Dame down the way. It was gratifying, as an artist, to be there. Then, when I came home, I found out I'd won the World Fantasy Award for Best Artist."

It's the third time he's been recognised by the body, and the prize is just one of numerous accolades he's collected over a career in fantasy spanning four decades. But he doesn't like to describe his style as fantastical. For him, that equates to large men in armour fighting dragons. The Vess approach is more subtle.

"When I was first trying to break in, I tried to develop paintings that had those aspects in them," he says. "After a while, I began to realise that I was just flat-out

**A CIRCLE OF CATS**  
The fascinating endpapers for Charles de Lint's book of the same name.

## Artist PROFILE

### Charles Vess

After training in fine art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Charles escaped to New York in 1976, establishing himself as a comic artist and fantasy illustrator. He later returned to his home state of Virginia, where he now lives.  
[www.greenmanpress.com](http://www.greenmanpress.com)



## A SPRINKLING OF STARDUST

Charles Vess looks back on a magical tale that swept him into the realm of fantasy

Arguably the finest fantasy illustration works in the Charles Vess portfolio are the 175 illustrations that he did for Neil Gaiman's story *Stardust*. The book was released in 1998 and is set in the 19th century, but it also takes the reader over into the ethereal world of fairies.

Charles more or less thrives on the influences of artists like Arthur Rackham and Alphonse Mucha and, fittingly, the story opens in a faerie market. "Neil is quite good," says Charles. "He doesn't just write for the artist involved; he might also write something that'll pull you out of what you're used to and challenge you a bit. It's quite fun working with him."

"*Stardust* really changed people's perception of my work, and I sort of crept out of the comic book direct market into the world of illustration with the book," he goes on. "I've been moving that way every since."

The collaboration between Charles and Neil has been mutually beneficial over the years, and a film version of *Stardust* came out in 2007, which credited Vess for his artwork and also renewed interest in the print version. "The movie did really well in Europe, but not too well in the US," Charles says. "It made the book sell like crazy, though, so that was good. I'm proud of the work, and still love looking at it."



### THE SLOW DANCE OF THE INFINITE STARS

*This internal image from Stardust is imbued by the kind of subtle and poetic undertones that Charles loves.*



### THE FAIRY MARKET

Neil Gaiman's storyline for *Stardust* gave Charles ample opportunity to indulge his passion for Rackham-esque painting. It's a particular favourite of the artist's and he's never bowed to pressure to sell it to collectors.

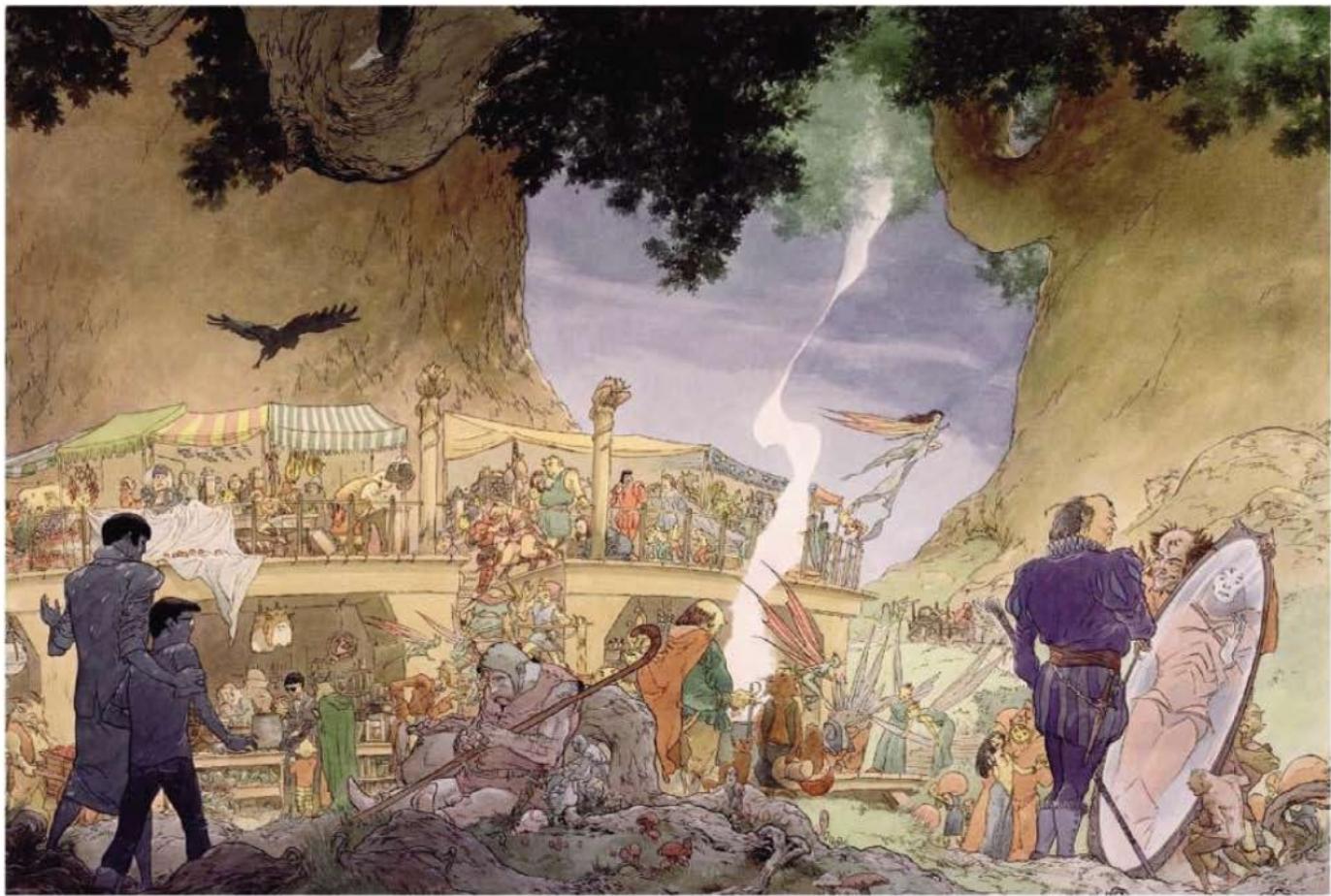


C.Vess-#1

# CHARLES VESS

## MORE BOOKS OF MAGIC

*After producing the Books of Magic mini series, DC began running it as a regular title, with Charles often called upon to create artwork.*



“I love the way the words and pictures collaborate to make a third world that neither one of the words nor pictures can make by themselves”

bad at it. So I tend to keep to the woodland scenes with elves and fairies.”

### THE COMIC CONNECTION

That's not to say he excludes heroes and drama. Take the Spider-Man painting used on the front of Web of Spider-Man issue one (see page 48). The superhero's black suit couldn't look more vivid, yet Charles managed to project a moody, Gothic setting that Marvel readers weren't used to in 1985. Alongside artists like Bill Sienkiewicz, he brought an arty approach to comics that would set the market on fire.

Aside from painting in liquid inks, he also uses watercolour and oil. And as well

as painting, he writes, sculpts and designs stage sets. Charles often refers to a nebulous borderland he likes to inhabit: “I love the interaction between words and pictures, and that can be done with an illustrated book, comic book, picture book for children, or movie. I just love the way the words and pictures collaborate to make a third world that neither one of the words nor pictures can make by themselves. Playing in that borderland is what I really enjoy in all my art.”

The popularity of the Web of Spider-Man cover boosted his reputation, leading to more high profile work. *Spider-Man: Spirits of the Earth* was a graphic novel he

wrote and drew that came out in 1990. Then he had a fantastic run of *Swamp Thing* covers, working with the writer Nancy Collins.

“That was blissful, drawing all the roots and branches I ever wanted to draw,” says Charles. “He’s basically a green man, like the old pagan, nature archetype. I applied a lot of techniques to the painting of those images. I learned a lot doing a painting a month, and trying different techniques, different applications and different ways to produce an interesting cover.”

During the same period, Charles began doing artwork for the Books of Magic series. This brought him into contact with one of his most important collaborators, Neil Gaiman. They produced the award-winning *Sandman #19*, an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Further projects surfaced, and the comic world began to lose its grip on both of them.

TURN  
TO PAGE  
**74**



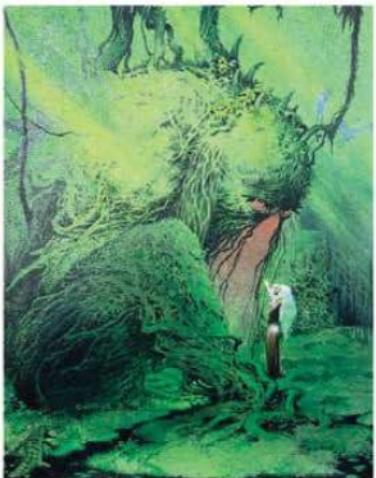
### Charles Vess workshop

*Discover the thought processes and ideas behind one of Charles's classic faerie images, Companions to the Moon.*



#### WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #1

The cover to Web of Spider-Man issue one is a favourite of many comic fans. Charles initially painted it as an inventory image for Marvel, who used it as the cover when it launched the title.



**“With superheroes, whoever has the biggest fist wins. It’s not the way I think of life. I want work that’s subtle, suggestive and poetic”**

#### SWAMP THING #135

Charles loved the mystical, paganistic, green man aspect to the Swamp Thing character, but also used the opportunity to paint these covers to experiment with his techniques.

“With superheroes, whoever has the biggest fist wins,” says Charles. “It’s not the way I think of life. I want work that’s subtle and poetic; that leaves room for the reader or viewer to participate in the story.”

In 1997 and 1998, Charles and Neil worked on perhaps their most important project. The four-part story *Stardust* included 175 paintings and won numerous awards. More recently, Charles has illustrated Gaiman’s *Blueberry Girl* poem, which was released in 2009. Early last year,

Instructions, in which they created a children’s guide to faerieland, came out.

Shortly after *Stardust* appeared, Charles’s wife Karen suffered spinal injuries in a car accident. They didn’t have insurance to cover the treatment they needed, so Charles looked for ways to raise funds. Gaiman suggested asking artists to contribute to a follow-up to *Stardust*. Charles invited 30 artists, including Mike Mignola and Brian Froud, to get involved with *A Fall of Stardust*. For legal reasons it wasn’t published as a

## INSTRUCTIONS

Charles's latest collaboration with Neil Gaiman is *Instructions*, a book that guides the reader through the realm of fairies.



book, released instead as a portfolio with two Stardust story pamphlets.

"It's a really interesting, creative way to deal with a devastating incident," says Charles. "Just doing the footwork on this was quite a bit of work. Any time you're getting a bunch of artists doing one thing, you're herding cats."

Today, he's as busy as ever. While a 4x8 foot watercolor sits on his easel, he's also painting 50 images for an expansion to Charles de Lint's *A Circle of Cats*. And there's more. "I'm working on a project called *The Greenwood*, and it has sections of graphic narrative, pure text and illustration. There I am in the borderland again, playing with all these different things, and that's exciting." ☀



## SPIRITS OF THE EARTH

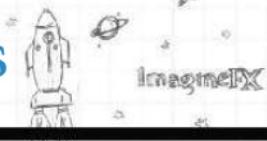
What happened when Charles took Peter Parker and Mary Jane to the Highlands

Charles Vess regards *Spider-Man: Spirits of the Earth*, his 1990 graphic novel for Marvel, to be one of the key breakthrough pieces of his early career. "I took him out of New York City and sent him to Scotland, so he couldn't react the way he usually does in a story because he couldn't simply swing away from a villain," he says.

Charles wrote and illustrated the book, and it contains many of his favorite subjects, such as fairies, ruins and castles, as well as equally Celtic elements – pubs and windswept grasslands.

Although it had been drawn earlier, *Spider-Man: Spirits of the Earth* came out at roughly the same time as *Sandman* #19, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* adaptation Charles worked on with Neil Gaiman. He feels that the two works really gave his career a jolt, within comic art at least.

"Both of those titles came out within a month of each other," he says. "So, suddenly, I was on the map. Retailers were aware of what I did, and a lot of other people were too. I still have very, very good memories of both of those works."



# Art Class

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**“I want to take this image to a final level and be able to see my own limits. For some reason, finishing a piece has been one of my biggest issues”** *Nibras Ibnomer*

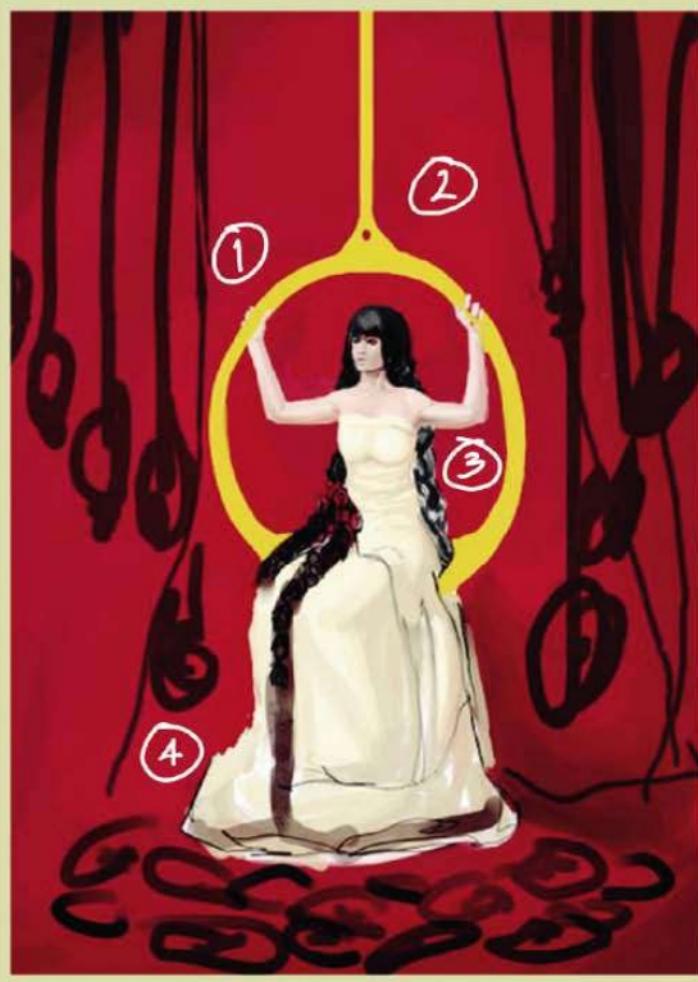
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART  
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The Mentor  
**Cynthia Sheppard**  
 A regular contributor to ImagineFX, Cynthia Sheppard is an award-winning fantasy illustrator from Fairfax, VA. Her clients include publishers of paperback books, RPG campaigns, collectible cards and online games.  
[www.sheppard-arts.com](http://www.sheppard-arts.com)

Nibras explained that the idea for her image came from the tarot card Priestess of Pentacles. In her image though, the priestess is replaced by a princess. Nibras liked the idea of the contrast between a pentacle, which is usually associated with devil worship, and the princess, who would be pure of heart and beautiful.

I always like to do research before I start a piece, so I know what kind of flavour to add to the characters and their surroundings. In this case, I see a lot of opportunity for symbolism beyond the meaning of the pentacle suit in the tarot.

Nibras has said that she wants to push the image to a final level. There are two points to remember when you're making an artwork that contains a high level of detail. The first is tracking down good reference material – either from your own resources or images online – and the second is to have patience. Spend time getting all the details consistent. So that she can do this, I'll set Nibras four areas to focus on.



1. Composition  
My first task will be creating a few thumbnails sketches showing variations on what Nibras has already done. I'll demonstrate how subtle changes in composition can be effective to a painting.

2. Colour and light  
The piece is divided vertically, with stark contrast in the colours. We'll be working on bringing the hues together to make them more unified, as though they're all existing within one space.

3. The figure  
I'll give Nibras some tips on painting the figure, smoothing out the skin and rendering the tones. We'll also look at simple ways of developing the character's facial features to bring her to life.

4. Fabrics  
I'll offer some advice on painting material texture to heighten the realism in the folds and creases of the dress. We'll be looking at ways of blending colour to create true-to-life fabrics.



## Part one: Composition – create focal points



This stage is less about technical skills and more about conceptualisation. This would normally come towards the beginning, before pencil or brush touches the paper, but Nibras has already started with a solid, strong layout, so we'll quickly examine her storytelling and see where it can be improved and where she's excelled. She tells me that her young princess is a source of advice, is in touch with nature and is gifted with knowledge to help people achieve their goals. Her work is draining; when she needs to rest she comes into the room Nibras has depicted and the pentacles revive her. The red dims her connection to nature and enables her to rest. Knowing this, we can look more closely at Nibras's composition and imagery.



**1** If we divide the piece into thirds, most of the focus is on the central column. Using a symmetrical composition can have a lot of impact, but I'd suggest tailoring the information around the edges to further support the figure.



**2** The V-shape of the pentacles leads the eye to the bottom of her dress. Varying the height of the pentacles breaks up the horizontal planes and puts the focus on the figure. I'd also extend the dress to break out of that central plane.

**3** Nibras could rearrange the elements to push the viewer's eye around the piece. A symmetrical formation around the figure instead of randomly staggered pentacles could also work.

### In conversation...



**Nibras:** I'm learning so much from this. I'm able to loosen up at the beginning stages much more, and the way you lay down strokes to show form has got things sorted out in my mind.



I started by clearing away the line of the pentacles and cleaned the background area. I also began laying down the base for the first pentacle.



I rendered the pentacles while keeping in mind the general surroundings, taking into account where the light is and how gold reacts to it.



This is where I moved on to the figure and the putting down of basic blocks of colour. I also did a lot of thinking about light direction and form.

## Part two: Colour and light – set the mood



Nibras has a beautifully saturated palette, and one thing that bold colours tend to do is reflect onto one another. For starters, if her intention is for the pentacles and round seat to be made of gold, it would be picking up a lot of red from the background. The red and gold tones would also be reflected back onto the figure's skin and dress. Nibras needs to unify the painting's elements through colour, reflecting the gold on the character and warming the shades.



**1** Add warmth to the skin by creating a 10 per cent Opacity Multiply layer and going over the flesh and dress areas with a sampled background colour. This technique also makes it feel as though all the pieces are from the same environment.



**2** Light is probably the most important thing to address when it comes to the mood of this piece. I'd suggest using strong frontal illumination. That way, we'll see more of her features and the shadows will be darker in contrast, making her stand out from the red background. The shape of her dress will also come across as more dramatic.

### In conversation...



**Nibras:** Cynthia, your advice at the beginning about putting in the effort and being patient has really kept me going with this. I keep referring back to it. I'm moving on to the figure now because I want to take a break

and be able to jump between elements to refresh myself.

**Cynthia:** I'm thrilled at how the lighting of the piece is going, and how much looser and stronger your brush strokes are in your latest examples. The pentacles are starting to take

shape, and the lighting on the dress looks great. It seems as though it has depth and roundness to it. I'm also glad that you're working around the image and not concentrating on one spot for too long.

It looks like you've made a lot of progress on the form of the figure

already, and got the lighting blocked in consistently with the illumination on the dress. The way you've brought some of the red and yellow hues into the skin really makes it seem as though the princess is there, and that the ambience of the objects in the room is affecting her.



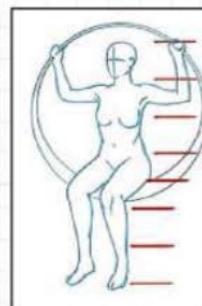
# ImagineNation Art Class

## Part three: The figure – refine its appearance



When I spoke with Nibras, she said that she wanted to work from her imagination rather than use photo references to create her princess. Even though my initial reaction was to urge her toward the latter technique, the more I thought about it, the more I accepted her choice to work purely from her mind. Using photography has always been, to me, the second-best thing to having live models in-studio, but there's a certain boldness in being able to create without using any sort of link to the real world that should be respected.

In this section, I've suggested how to refine the princess's physical proportions, and relying on my own imagination for this exacting task demands that I recall anatomy lessons from college. I also had to make that mental shift from grabbing my camera to going straight for the tablet pen.



### In conversation...



**Nibras:** I can't get the colours in the image right: the skin tones and the dress. I've spent a lot of time blending on the neck, but it needs more work.

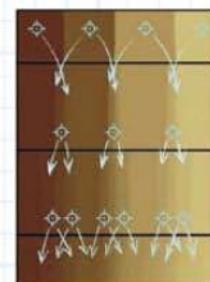


**Cynthia:** I think that the blending on the skin is also working out well. After the large areas of flesh colour are blended

**1** First, get the proportions accurate. Without a model, we'll have to figure out the princess's overall size based on where her bottom and hands intersect with the circular seat. If we base her body on the assumption that her total height is seven times the height of her head (good, tall dimensions), we can figure out where the rest of her might go.

**2** Because the princess's legs will be covered by the dress, Nibras doesn't have to worry about feet. However, based on average proportions, the thigh-to-knee length would be about one-and-a-half head heights. Measuring everything this way might be a more laborious process than using a model, but it can give fairly accurate results.

**3** Next we need to tackle the definition of the facial features and smooth out the skin. When it comes to blending and smoothing surfaces, the technique of sampling from within your work becomes essential. The diagram demonstrates the tactic I use to merge multiple tones together. In Photoshop, I use a hard, round brush set to 100 per cent opacity, with the Brush Dynamics at Shape Dynamics>On, and Other Dynamics>Opacity Jitter/0%/Pen Pressure. That gives you control over every stroke. Choose a low opacity and you'll be brushing over the same area many times.



## Part four: Fabrics – get the look right



With any assignment involving fabric, I like to go to my closet and pull out a similar type of material to use as a live reference. I know Nibras is apprehensive about using photos, but I would still recommend that she uses a still life example for the dress folds. Their shape is organic, and the best way to practise capturing them is by drawing from the real thing.



**1** Grab a dress or light-coloured sheet and drape it over something that's knee-shaped. Long, draped fabric can be roughed

in by creating alternating dark and light strokes. Nibras can then blend between the gaps using the same technique she did on the skin.

### In conversation...



**Nibras:** I've been working on it for hours but even though I'm learning loads of new techniques – for which I'll always be grateful – my hard work just doesn't seem to show.

**Cynthia:** Not at all – there's some nice work on the pentacles and the dress.

**Nibras:** I've fixed most of the pentacles, laid out the ones on the floor properly and blended the dress using the technique you suggested. I



agree with you on finishing this up quickly before I start losing interest. Next, I'll finish off the princess's dress and the bottom set of pentacles.

**Cynthia:** I'm glad you mentioned losing interest in an image, because stagnation sometimes gets the better of even the most outstanding, professional artists. I can assure you that it'll be worth taking this one to the finish.

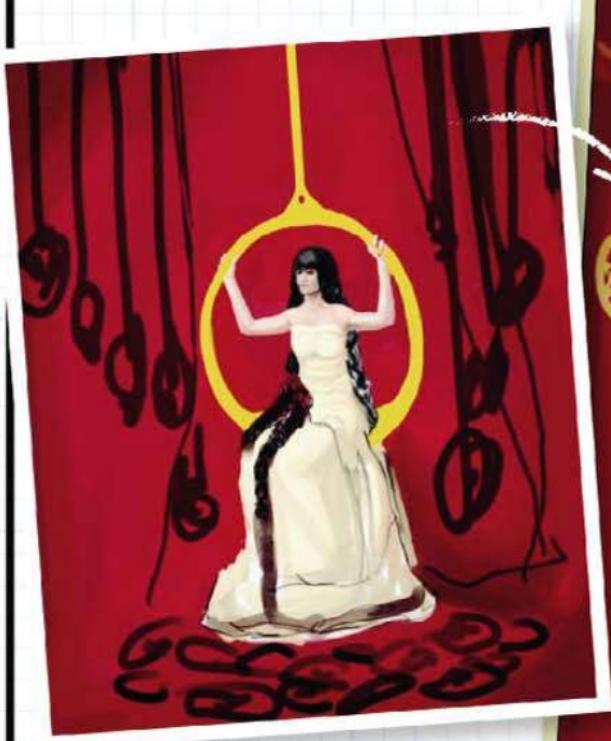


# The end result



"The final artwork looks great. I think Nibras did a good job of thinking through the character's role as the princess. In fact, she was ahead of the game, because she had a good idea of who her character was before starting the piece."

Cynthia Sheppard



It just goes to show how much you can achieve if you've got someone pointing you in the right direction. Nibras's painting and composition skills have come on in leaps and bounds.



## What did Nibras learn?



**"Now I've got a lot more knowledge it's become so much easier to put what's in my imagination on canvas. It's pretty much made my year!"**

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# Sketchbook

## Daniel Landerman

The creator of Dakota Rawhide reveals his love for one of Dracula's brides, Princess Amidala... and Conan

### Artist PROFILE

#### Daniel Landerman

Somewhere along the line Daniel's love for art and stories collided and are now inseparable. "Hence my tendency to strive for both mood and narrative in all my work," he says.

Right now Daniel's a freelance illustrator and sketch artist living in New York, working on advertising, videogame and promotional art, and storyboarding TV spots. He's also worked as a film concept artist, doing character design and matte paintings. [www.artdl.com](http://www.artdl.com)

#### 05\_NATIVES

"This was development for a contest that I never finished due to work. But I keep coming back to these sketches and wanting to do something with them if time allows."



#### 07\_NATIVES

"I tend toward serious stories; gritty, gnarly at times. But every now and again I love capturing little intimate moments. The two little Skully Squirrels had me smiling as I sketched."



#### 06\_NATIVES

"The profile shot is still one of my favourite sketches simply because it turned out exactly as I pictured. It says 'Pixie' to me in just the right way."

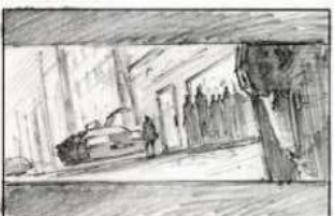
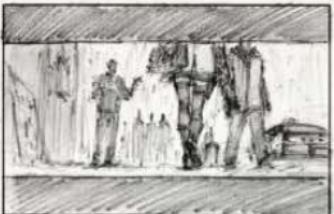
## sketchbook Daniel Landerman

**NATALIE PORTMAN**

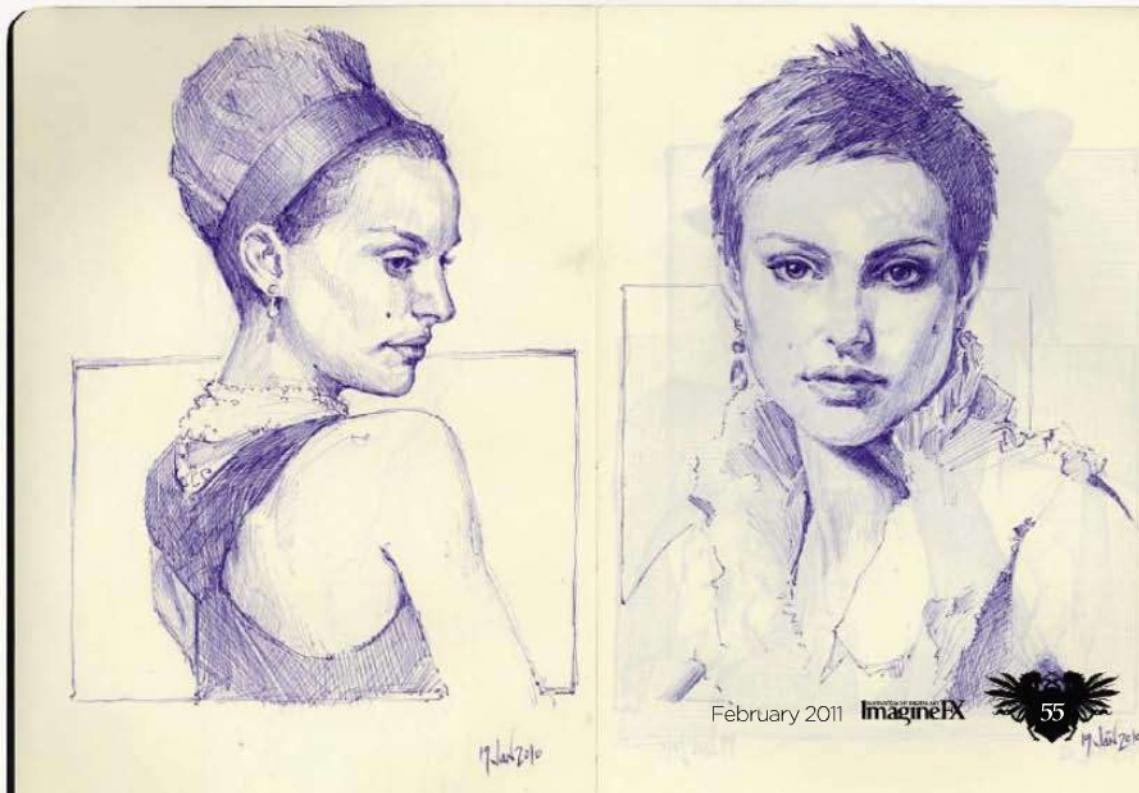
"I love you Natalie! 'P' is for Portman! 'P' is for Portman!..."  
Okay, so I guess you get the general inspiration for this one."

**11\_DAKOTA**

"I liked the idea that Dakota would have a "To Do" list: Massage, hairstylist, manicure, cocktail dress, sexy shoes, gunfight, late lunch and so on. The cockiness of knowing she'd be eating later still makes me laugh."



*"Every now and again I love capturing intimate moments"*



# Sketchbook



## ÉMILIE DEQUENNE

"Émilie has amazing features. Radiant. Which is why I based Dakota's face on hers. Have you noticed the transparency of the paper? I love it. The shapes that show through just do it for me."

## BELLUCCI DAKOTA

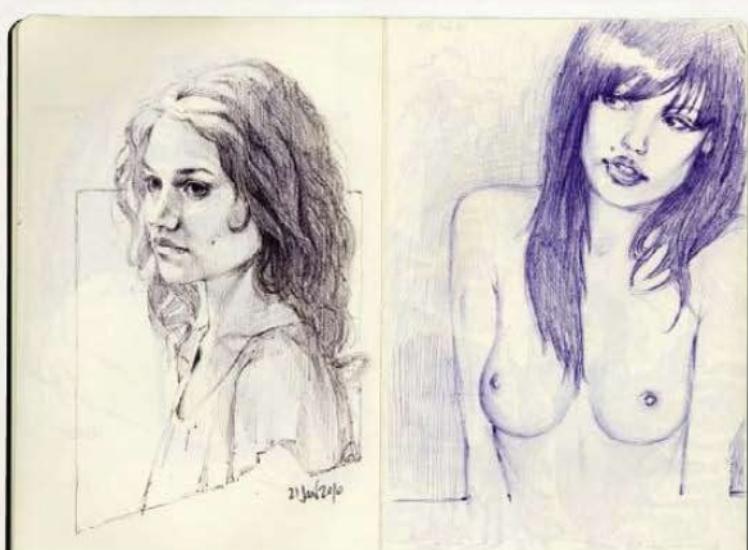
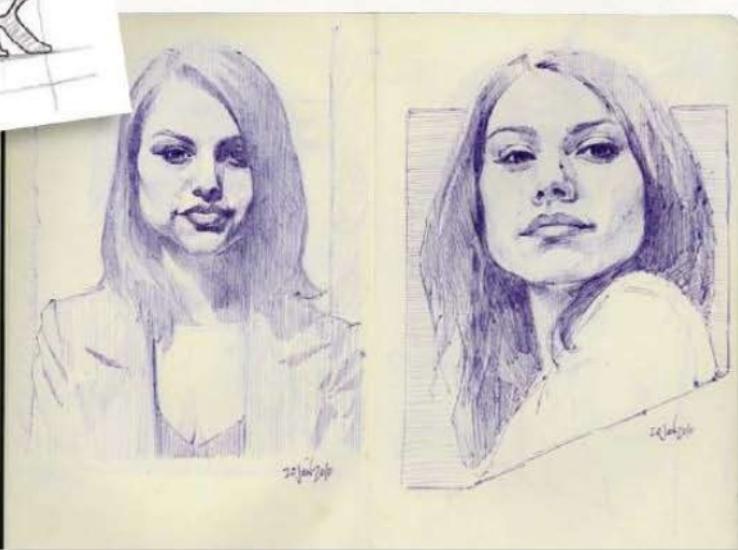
"Monica Bellucci, and my character Dakota "Rawhide" Tayler - one real, one not, more's the pity. There's something really energising about drawing with pen. It's all about having to make very deliberate choices and be right the first time."

## 10\_DAKOTA

"I like to learn about a character by sketching various moods we might see them in. So much can be conveyed by the way a person might stand, depending on how they're feeling at the moment."

## ÉMILIE VIKKIB

"I went to a black ballpoint, decided I didn't like it and had to draw Vikki Blows to clear it from my mind. So here's to you England! She's worth every stroke of the pen."



## sketchbook Daniel Landerman

**DAKOTA FASHION\_01**

"I've been rediscovering the blue pencil from my animation school days. The look of the blue lines underneath, but also the way the graphite glides over them is always very satisfying."

**DAKOTA FASHION**

"When I'm initially coming up with a design, I usually snag my inspiration from a single piece of the outfit and then design from there. In this case it was Dakota's belt. It gives me a clear focal point so I can be more aware of contrasting elements."

**DAKOTA FASHION\_02**

"These are part of a series of Dakota outfits, which are part of my latest sketchbook project. I think it's clear that when I do character design I reference fashion shows more than I reference post-apocalyptic or long-time-ago-far-away anything."

**CONAN**

"At some point you just need to draw Conan. This was done at The Original Drink & Draw when it was at the Falcon in Hollywood. I'd been reading Robert E. Howard, caught the bug and had to sketch it."

*"There's something energising about drawing with pen"*



**Want to share your sketches?** Or know an artist you'd like to see featured in Sketchbook? Then drop us an email at [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com), or upload your sketches at [www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook](http://www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook).

# Development sheet

## PROJECT TITLE: NESTOR OF THE ARGONAUTS

With friends from university, **Cody Gramstad** is visualising Jason and the Golden Fleece. He's chosen to design Nestor, the oldest Argonaut, to take up the adventure. Here's how he created the venerable character...

### Artist PROFILE

#### Cody Gramstad

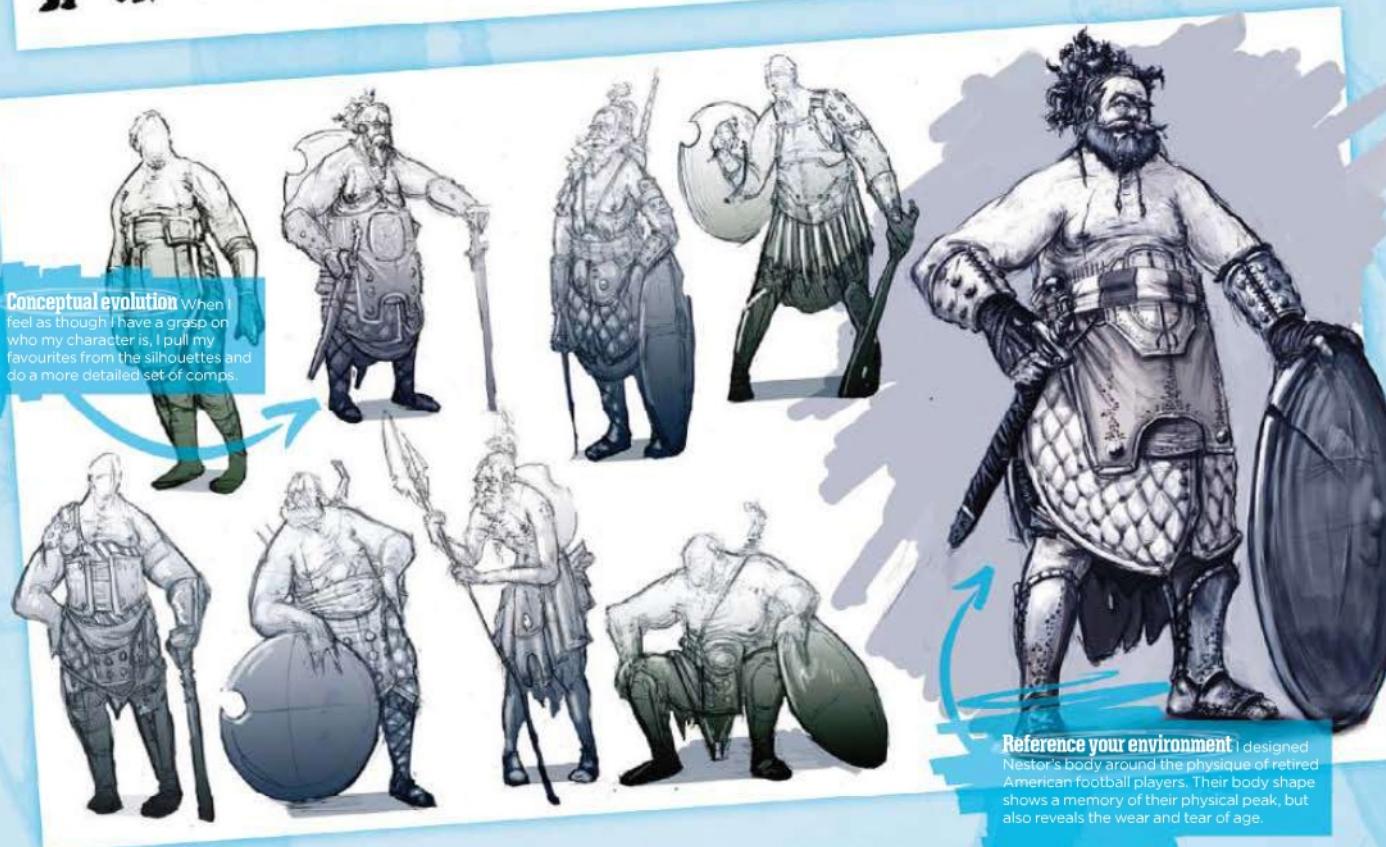


Cody is a 23-year-old artist from a small island off Seattle, WA, studying animation and illustration at San José State University.

As a student, his goal is to take as much information from all the different artistic styles and create his own artistic voice. He'll be looking for his first industry internship in the next year or two. [ctg-art-works.blogspot.com](http://ctg-art-works.blogspot.com)

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION ART  
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**Silhouettes** I start with a quick brainstorm of outlines to discover who the character is. This is a sample of the silhouettes I produced for Nestor; I usually do between 100 and 150 sketches for every figure I create. This enables the subject to develop visually while my own interpretation of who they are evolves in my mind.



**Conceptual evolution** When I feel as though I have a grasp on who my character is, I pull my favourites from the silhouettes and do a more detailed set of comps.

**Reference your environment** I designed Nestor's body around the physique of retired American football players. Their body shape shows a memory of their physical peak, but also reveals the wear and tear of age.

# Development sheet Nestor of the Argonauts



## Sweat the small stuff

When painting a character, I try to put aside the big picture and focus on the minute details of their daily life. Nestor's skin is heavily tanned and sunburnt because of the many days that he spent out at sea on the Argo. His clothes and armour are covered in dirt, grime and blood, reminiscent of his long history of battles. Every imperfection and unique attribute helps the audience to accept the character.



## Be a team player

Nestor was designed to be placed in a lineup with the rest of Jason's Argonauts, who were illustrated by some of my peers from university; this meant I needed to follow guidelines. He had to be put in a simple, static pose, lit by a clean, white light source and following a certain perspective. Your ego must be put aside when you're working with a group.

## SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

**LET US KNOW!** Email your WIPs and final images to: [develop@imaginefx.com](mailto:develop@imaginefx.com)



**WATERFALL DRAGONS**  
Matthew says it took him a month to paint this stunning image – not because it was especially difficult, but simply because he couldn't stop adding detail to it.

[Close](#)

“ You can’t judge your art by awards, but rather in how close you can come to your own artistic ambitions ”

# MATTHEW STEWART

LOADING...

A brace of Chesley awards have fast-tracked the artist onto the A-list. Call it his destiny...

*I* used to buy Dungeons & Dragons manuals and magazines just for the covers," says Matthew Stewart. "It wasn't until I was in art school that it hit me that if I was going to make art my living, my best chance at success would be creating the art I love."

That, of course, is just what he's been doing for the past ten years or so – and that love of D&D has certainly paid off, too. Much of Matthew's work now involves creating card art for Magic: The Gathering – as well as other RPGs – while he also features in many Spectrum annuals and has recently won not just one but two Chesley awards.

"Recognition is nice, but I know that there's plenty of stuff out there worthy of the award that didn't win," he says of that experience. "You can't judge your art by awards, but rather in how close you can come to your own artistic ambitions personally. What winning an award like a Chesley means is that I'm being recognised as a peer among the community of artists, writers and fans that ASFA [the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy artists] seeks to promote."

It all comes back to that enduring love of the fantasy genre – but why this specifically? "That's a hard question," he says. "It's kind of like asking why I like chocolate ice cream. I guess it's because I love history, science, geography and literature. Fantasy is a place where I can indulge and utilise all those interests – it's wide open. Anything can exist in fantasy; you're only limited by what you can imagine."

## STUDIO TIME

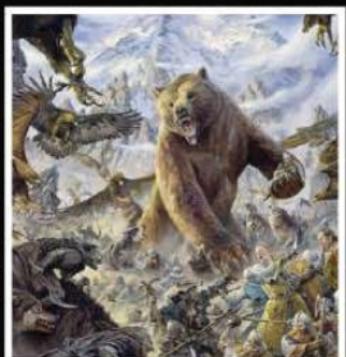
Matthew and his wife Gina – who's also an artist – have the privilege of working from their own house, the upper floor of which has been converted into their studio. Because both work mainly with traditional materials, this space has been kept intentionally rough and ready. "We never refinished the hardwood floors so we don't have to worry about spilling paint," Matthew says by way of example.

"I have an easel and drawing table, along with bookshelves full of books for reference and inspiration. On one side of my easel is a moveable taboret where I keep my palette and brushes. On the other side I have a computer where I can bring up ➤

## Artist PROFILE

### Matthew Stewart

COUNTRY: US  
FAVOURITE ARTISTS:  
Howard Pyle, N. C.  
Wyeth, Alan Lee,  
John Howe, Michael  
Whelan and Donato Giancola  
SOFTWARE USED:  
Traditional media and Painter  
WEB: [www.matthew-stewart.com](http://www.matthew-stewart.com)



**THE BATTLE UNDER THE MOUNTAIN**  
Matthew won a Chesley award for his dynamic portrayal of *The Hobbit's* climatic battle.

## Gallery





**VALLEY OF SHADOWS** This cover art, painted for the book of the same name, was also up for a Chesley Award.

## DAUGHTER OF ARIES

Matthew created this image after watching a documentary. "It was about the discovery of the 2,300-year-old skeletal remains of a warrior priestess in a tomb on the Russian steppes and how these women might have been the inspiration for the Amazon warriors in *The Iliad*," he says.

"The Amazon's left breast is exposed and she wears a tunic with a zigzag pattern. This alludes to depictions of Amazons on Greek pottery. Her right breast is covered and might have been removed, referring to the legend that Amazons cut their right breast so that they could shoot their bows and throw spears better..." Meanwhile, the leopard covering is inspired by Japanese archers, "just because it looks cool".

### Comments



It's a tribute to Matthew's skills that the different patterns and textures of this warrior's attire hang together so well. I never thought I'd say this, but it's much more satisfying to view than a woman in a gold bikini.



One of my favourite pieces of his is *Skyward Eye Prophets*. This image really shows off Matthew's ability to capture light and shadow. The fact that he's able to do this with traditional paints makes me all the more jealous. A true modern master.



Matthew's work is beautiful and definitely shows that traditional media isn't dead. Each of his paintings has a life to it and evokes feelings and emotions with ease. In his work, he manages to convey a feeling that there's an epic story underneath it all waiting to be told.



# MATTHEW STEWART

photo references. There's a big closet in the back to store all my paintings and some equipment and supplies, too."

All of Matthew's work starts as thumbnails, which he treats very much as a staging and composition tool with little detail. "My thumbnails are undecipherable by anybody but me", he says. When he's happy, he scans this into Photoshop, blows it up and begins adding black and white values before moving on to colour. By this stage he's ready to send roughs to the art director of the project in question.

Next comes the reference material: "Images from books, the internet or my own personal photo reference files," he says. "If the image calls for people, I'll shoot photographic reference in rudimentary costumes – usually me or friends and family. Sometimes I'll build small maquettes and photograph them in the appropriate lighting."

From this, he creates a fully detailed comprehensive drawing, usually pencil on paper, and possibly a more detailed colour study. This is transferred to Masonite, and the final painting stage is ready to begin. "I paint in oils, using liquin as a painting medium. A preliminary layer of semi-transparent oil colour is applied to establish the loose colour statement, or chiaroscuro, first and allowed to dry. Then I start building up more opaque colours, usually working from background to foreground. If something can't be addressed in one pass, it's allowed to dry and finished the next day."

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION

As Matthew points out, the main drawback with oils can be waiting for the necessary drying time – and this can be particularly problematic if he's on a tight deadline. It's partly for this reason that he has started to experiment with digital painting, which has been something of a revelation for him. "I love the freedom of it," he explains. "I've found that I can just jump right into full colour, and if things aren't working, just go back in my History palette or just



**KNOTVINE PALADIN** This is Matthew's card art of a heroic character that inhabits the universe of Magic: The Gathering.

start a new file. I also don't have to wait for paint to dry or arrive at a high level of finish. The only thing I hate about it is that you don't have a one-of-a-kind original at the end..."

This flexibility is even more important because in the past few years Matthew feels he's really taken the idea of using colour to heart, when compared to his earlier, relatively monochromatic work. "It's because I didn't think about using colour as a compositional element until I was well into my creative process," he explains. "Now I address colour right away in the thumbnail stage. Working on card art for Magic: The Gathering, where the image will be reproduced at such a small size, has forced me to have strong foreground/background relationships and to really be aware of value. I think this has made me a much better artist in all the art I do." ■



**KOR FIREWALKER** This Magic: The Gathering character lives on a world where gravity is rather erratic, hence the hooks and rings on his gear."

## Gallery



# EXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

## Tony Philippou

LOCATION: US  
WEB: [yanahmean.blogspot.com](http://yanahmean.blogspot.com)  
EMAIL: [hilippou@gmail.com](mailto:hilippou@gmail.com)  
MEDIA: Oil



"My works centre on the juxtaposition of conflicting stereotypes," says Tony, "to create a sense of harmony in a world that shouldn't be possible." His paintings include figurative forms of iconic personalities, with a smattering of various styles, including Art Nouveau, figurative, abstract and surrealism.

"I recently completed a long-standing series on the religious figures of Jeezus Piece, Judas Piece and The Vixen Mary," he says, "a complete remix on the iconography and ideology of these characters, I wanted them to be as far away from what you would expect."

### 1 DAYTIME IN BRONXZOOLAND

18x24in, oil on wood

"This piece puts our heroine Mary the third in a series that includes Jeezus Piece and Judas Piece in BronxZooLand. Mary's classically portrayed as the bearer of Jeezus and is typically seen this way. I felt the need to keep the ideology centered on her looking mystical, but very dangerous."

### 2 JUDAS PIECE KING SERPENTINE

11x15in, oil on wood

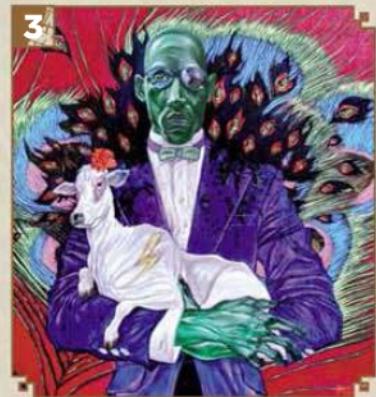
"Painting on top of the wood background is another way I like to work. The contrast between nature and paint is awesome. This is a portrait of Judas with his woman and you'll notice a huge yellow snake, which is meant to be symbolic. One of my favourites pieces."

### 3 ARGUS & IO

12x2in, oil on wood

"Hera suspects that her husband Zeus is out with his mistress Io. Which is exactly what's going down. Zeus, anticipating his wife's desire to chastise him in his treachery, seeks a more elusive solution. He turns Io into a beautiful white heifer."





#### IMAGINEFX CRIT

 "I don't have much time for religious imagery, but here I'll make an exception. Daytime in BronxZooLand could easily be a pulp crime cover, with the feisty heroine on a mission to avenge a heinous crime." **Cliff Hope, Operations Editor**

**+ Domini Deane**

**LOCATION:** England  
**WEB:** [www.dominideane.com](http://www.dominideane.com)  
**EMAIL:** [domini@dominideane.com](mailto:domini@dominideane.com)  
**MEDIA:** Watercolour



Domini is a self-taught artist who's been drawing magical creatures since she could pick up a crayon. "I guess it helps that I was born in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado," she says, "and that I now live and work in England."

She's currently designing a Chinese zodiac collection and a series of multi-cultural angels, and plans to write a children's book someday.

**1 THE PORTLAND SEA DRAGON**

12x16in, watercolour

"This is the cover illustration for a book by Carol Hunt, published by Roving Press in March 2010. I spent a wonderful day with Carol, exploring the Isle of Portland on England's southern shores while she told me about her book. I think we captured the mood of the place."

**2 LADY IN THE WOODS**

12x16in, watercolour

"Lady in the Woods is one of my favourites. I was listening to Andrew Lloyd Webber's Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again as I worked, and the watercolour just seemed to dance and flow across the paper. I always have music or a DVD playing while I paint."

**3 YEAR OF THE DRAGON**

12x16in, watercolour

"This is the first in a series of 12 fantasy prints that are based on the Chinese Zodiac. I love oriental art and culture - the colours and costumes, the legends and history! This painting was really fun to do and I'm looking forward to the next ones."

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**

 "Such amazing colours and a bold style that jumps off the page... have you spotted all the little animals in Lady In The Woods?"

Ian Dean,  
Deputy Editor



**2**



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Want to see your traditional art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi TIFF or JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

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[fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)

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FXPosé Traditional  
ImagineFX  
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Bath, BA1 2BW  
UK

**3**





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See page 114 for full DVD contents ➤

# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX

# Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

**26**  
PAGES OF  
TUITION



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## Video workshops on your free DVD...

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Cover artist Charlie Bowater paints a stunning portrait.

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Fantasy legend Charles Vess on what to consider when working to a commission.

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Robert Kim shows you how to capture this distinctive look.

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Discover the benefits of applying drawing techniques to your art with Justin Gerard.

# Photoshop BREATHE LIFE INTO A FANTASY FIGURE

This month's cover features a stunning female that fuses a fantasy setting with elements of reality. **Charlie Bowater** reveals how she painted it

**I** make no secret of being a pretty big fan of ImagineFX, right from when I first stumbled into digital art a few years back. So when I was asked to paint a cover, I was thrilled.

I've loved art for as long as I can remember and I had a pencil in my hand as soon as I could hold one. When I was around 17 I dipped my toes in the digital

realm and I was, quite frankly, terrible. Practice and a fair amount of patience worked wonders for me – I was hooked!

These days my favourite elements to paint are bright colours and, as it's most obvious from my gallery, women. I seem to have an affinity with painting females, left over from my childhood (oh, those Disney Princess days!). For this workshop I'll be taking you through just that (minus



## 1 Sketch my ideas

I don't always begin my pieces with a sketch because I tend to alter my paintings a lot during the process, but in this case I needed to convey a fairly clear idea right from the beginning. I'm using 3,518 X 4,093-sized canvas at 350 DPI and a custom brush (created by Bao Pham) that nicely mimics a pencil/pastel-type texture. I'll also have my brush set to 100 per cent opacity and 100 per cent flow for the entirety of the painting.

## Artist PROFILE

**Charlie Bowater**  
COUNTRY: England

Recent graduate Charlie is a passionate artist and photographer who now puts her estimable talents to good use at Atomhawk, creating concept art for games and films.  
[charlie140588.deviantart.com](http://charlie140588.deviantart.com)

### DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Charlie Bowater folder in Workshops.

## ON THE DVD

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSH: SAMPLED BRUSH 9 12

Bao Pham's brush is a great all-rounder with a nice texture. See more of his work at [thienbao.deviantart.com](http://thienbao.deviantart.com).

the princess part). I'll be creating an ethereal fantasy female with Photoshop and I'll do my best to explain my process along the way. My way isn't the right way, but it's worked for me. Try not to take the steps too literally – I tend to filter and hop between steps, refining everything right until I reach the end. Painting takes time and plenty of practice, so just trust your instincts and work as hard as you can.



## 2 Apply base colours

As soon as I'm happy with the sketch, I move onto applying base colours. For this stage I ensure my sketch is on a separate layer and set that to Multiply. I then apply my base colours on a layer below. I'm not concerned with being overly neat at this stage – I'll clean things up later. I generally work from dark to light, although I intend for this to be a fairly bright painting and so my base colours are still quite light. I'm trying to emulate something ethereal and since her dress is based on a flower, I decide on a colour theme based around hydrangeas, which are pale blue and lilacs.

In depth Paint a fantasy figure



# Workshops

## Shortcuts

### Move around

Shift (PC & Mac)

Hold this key down and drag the image to move around quickly when zoomed in.



### 3 Introduce soft lighting

I don't want an overly strong light source or harsh shadows. I'm after something that's bright, yet soft and subtle. Because the character is looking up and her face is the focus I'll create simple lighting from above. The more emphasis that I can place on her face, the better.

### 4 Use of layers

From this point onwards, everything I paint is above the sketch. I tend to flatten my sketch and base colour layers, and then work above them. I generally stick to just a few layers while I'm working – you should use as many layers as you're comfortable with.

### 5 First details pass

Now that I'm happy with the sketch I then move onto detailing the character, starting with her face. I'm not aiming for a realistic portrayal here: over the years my style has fallen somewhere between cartoonish and realism, and in the end I just enjoy creating something that looks nice!



### 6 Flipping the image

One of the most integral parts of my painting process is flipping my image. It's a good habit to pick up if you aren't doing it already. Flipping gives you a new perspective on your image – put simply, you see the opposite of it. It's a great way of checking for mistakes, because when you flip an image any flaws will stick out like a sore thumb. You can then easily correct them before you've gone too far into the painting. I probably flip a little too much, but it's a good idea to flip the picture every hour at least.

### 7 Establish a colour palette for the skin

As I start building up the features of her face, I'm also adding in different tones. For the base colour I start with a fairly standard mid-tone for her skin. I generally work from dark to light, painting in highlights and additional shadows as I go. I gradually add in highlights, bringing out the structure of her face: the forehead, eyebrows, nose, cheekbones and so on. I paint in warmer, pinkish tones for her lips, cheeks and also add a little to her nose and ears. To contrast that and to reflect the blue/lilac scheme, I add in some blueish tones to the shadows on her face. This will help to unify the colours in the painting, but there are always a variety of tones that you can use in skin colours regardless.



### 8 Paint the hair's style and colour

I paint the character's hair in the same manner as her skin, starting with a darker/mid-tone and then adding in highlights and shadows. I want her hair to be a light, ashy blonde colour. It's easy to mess up this colour tone and fall into greenish colours where it just looks muddy, so I'm making an effort to stay away from that. I paint in the main body of the hair, trying to emulate the way hair falls and drapes over her shoulder as naturally as possible.





## 9 Introduce freckles

I love painting freckles, I'd paint them all the time if I could. I try not to paint too many porcelain-perfect faces. I like them to have a bit of texture, and freckles and beauty marks are perfect for that. For this I'm using the same brush as before with the same settings on a Normal layer. I pick a slightly darker/tan skin tone and randomly dot in some freckles, concentrating them around the nose. You can find some great custom brushes specifically for freckles, but I'm quite happy painting them individually.

## 10 Use an Overlay layer

I occasionally introduce some highlights on an Overlay layer, in this instance on her face. I'm happy with the tones, but I'd like to add some more highlights in a slightly colder tone. I pick pale blue tone and add in the highlights with the layer opacity set to around 10-20 per cent. This brightens the face nicely, and using a blue tone rather than a skin tone prevents her from looking orange!



## 11 Depict the fabric

The dress in the image is also the entirety of the background. It's somewhere between fabric and petals, so that allows me a nice amount of artistic licence and the option to be fairly suggestive. The sketch of the dress is quite rough, so I go in with a fairly big brush and just lay down more base colours over the top. Then I start adding details, starting with a darker colour and then use highlights to bring out the form. I try and emulate the way fabric folds, falls and rests on itself, so I'm painting lots of creases and layers.

## 12 Crafting the hands

I try and keep in mind the size of the hand relative to the rest of the body, the face in particular. This helps to avoid making them too big or too small. Perfecting this is a fine art I've yet to master. But as with everything else, I work from the sketch and the base colours, and start building up the form of the hand. I try and highlight certain areas of the hand to give them some more emphasis, such as the knuckles and joints, although not too much – she's a lady after all! Thinking about the structure of the hand really helps when painting it. I'm also adding in much pinker tones for the tips of her fingers.



## 13 Apply rim lighting

Something which I love to paint is rim lighting. I always like to add secondary light sources to contrast shadows and bring out the form a little more. I usually go for a fairly bright light shade. Blue acts as a nice contrast against skin tones in particular, and it'll suit the monochrome style of colours. I add a little rim lighting to her side. I usually paint a bright edge and then fade in a gentler shade to bring out more form, such as the roundness of her shoulder and arm. I also add a little more to the side of her face, opting for a slightly darker shade.



### Use the Colour Balance tool

If you want to alter the colours of your painting then Colour Balance is a fast and easy way to slightly or completely change the tones of your image. You can warm it up by upping the reds, or make it cooler with blues. Make a duplicate of your entire image and alter the Colour Balance as you see fit.

## 14 Final touches

I finish up all of the rim lighting and the flowers in her hair. I also add some details spreading out from the touch of her hand: this is just a bright blue/white on a Normal layer. I also flatten the image and adjust the colour balance slightly, adding a little more blue and red to unify the colours. Finally, I add in a few little orbs and a slight blur around the edge. I duplicate the image layer and apply Gaussian blur to around 10 per cent, then erase away the areas I want to be in focus. This is a nice way of softening the image and bringing out the focus.

*Traditional skills*

# DELVE INTO THE MIND OF A MASTER

Acclaimed fantasy artist **Charles Vess** lifts the curtain and reveals what he thinks about when producing a piece of art for a private client

## Artist PROFILE

### Charles Vess

COUNTRY: US



A recent winner of the World Fantasy Award for Best Artist, Charles has created art for comics and books, famously collaborating with Neil Gaiman on Stardust. You can see more of his work in Drawing Down the Moon: The Art of Charles Vess. [www.greenmanpress.com](http://www.greenmanpress.com)

This image, entitled Companions to the Moon, was my first fully fledged commission. It began with an inquiry from an art buyer, who asked me if I'd consider painting a piece like my iconic Stardust image for him, which depicts Yvaine, the fallen star, kneeling in a forest glade. He'd seen the picture at a previous San Diego Comic-Con and been disappointed when told that it wasn't for sale. I love that painting and, knowing that I might be tempted to sell the piece,

had given it to my wife as a gift. We were simply displaying it over our table.

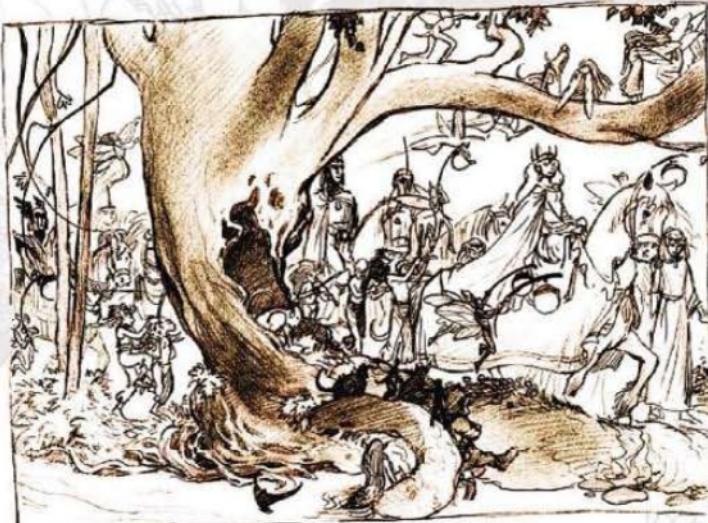
Initially, I declined the offer. Over the years, I've been asked numerous times about commissions but had never felt like I had the time in my work schedule to pay proper attention to such a piece. Furthermore, I'd never wanted to just be a hired hand, drawing or painting whatever a client dictated. Ideally, what I wanted was to be paid to do art from the heart.

In fact, I'd been thinking about several images that had been floating around in

my head for some time, wondering if they might never be painted because of constant deadlines with my book publishing work. So I wrote back to this particular client and described one of those art-from-the-heart pictures. I quoted a price that would give me the time to lavish the attention on the image that it deserved and still be able to pay the bills. I also gave a timeframe that was flexible enough to work such a painting into the present workload. There was a quick reply saying, "Yes, sounds great to me."

### 1 Sketch the idea

Here's my initial rough pencil sketch – done on 8.5x12-inch copier paper – of that idea. The image does share some similarities with the Stardust painting. Both are set in the deep, moonlit woods, and are filled with all sorts of faerie life. This preliminary drawing is rendered more elaborately than I would normally do for a simple concept sketch; I generally like to work out all my finished ideas on the actual board that I'll be working on.



### 2 Establish the composition

At the sketch stage I'm still just trying to establish the overall composition, as well as attempting to convey the general mood of the piece. There's no practical sense in adding all the countless details that will be necessary to achieve a painting's finished look until after the client says that they like it. And of course, it's extremely tedious to have already worked out all the details at an early stage and then have to redraw them all onto the actual working illustration board.

### 3 Transfer the image using tracing paper

After the sketch is approved, I enlarge it on my copy machine to the actual size (16x23 inches) that I'm going to paint the final piece. With the aid of a sheet of transfer paper, I trace the enlarged image onto my preferred paper – Strathmore Series 500, 4ply. After hours and hours of redrawing later, I arrive at this finished pencil drawing.



## 4 Search for ideas

For me, the process of drawing involves looking through the art and reference books that fill my studio. This isn't so much looking for how someone has already done the same idea and trying to copy their approach – where would the fun be in that? – but seeking random visual inspiration. What I might be looking for is a particular colour of moonlight that a certain artist has used in a painting; the toss of a horse's head; an interesting pattern in a dress; the peculiar twist of a tree branch. Hopefully, my subconscious will store all these details, and when I start to draw it'll be able to access that information.



## 5 Introduce characters

As you can see, I've also added lots of new characters into the drawing, placing details into all the costuming as well as specific facial characteristics for all the denizens of my faerie land extravaganza. I find that it also helps if, as I draw each of these characters, their particular story plays out in my thoughts. This mental process seems to add a certain reality to each elf, faerie, dragon, mermaid, or cat. But you have to be careful and not allow any of these faerie inhabitants to steal the spotlight for themselves. Every character, be they humanoid or rock or tree, needs to be integral to the picture as a whole.

# Workshops

## 6 Decide on the mood

Choosing which of these pencil lines to ink and which to leave in their graphite state is dependent on the overall mood I'm looking for. Early on, I decided that this image was going to be drenched in moonlight with a strong, diagonal beam flooding down onto the Faerie Queen herself. Therefore, I ink most of the piece with a sepia tone rather than a harsh, solid, black line. The light brown of the sepia ink makes it easier to dissolve certain forms back into the moonlight-and-shadow mood that I'm seeking.



## 7 Tackle the wings

All the faerie wings are rendered in a pale blue ink line. This makes it easier to suggest their translucent look. After years of painting with a transparent medium – FW Inks – I've found that you can leave out many of the hard pen outlines and replace them with pure colour for a better effect. Of course, only experience and patience will tell you which of those lines to leave in and which to take out.



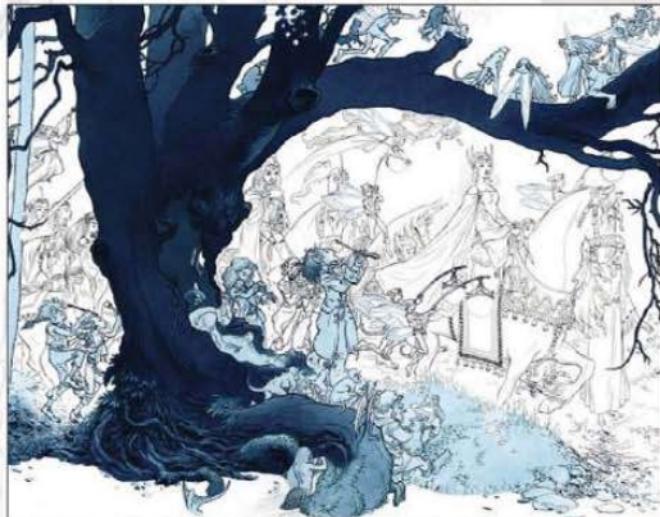
## 8 Step up to colour

Painting the first washes of colour onto a detailed piece can be an exceptionally scary process. I keep putting off applying those initial layers and worked on other projects for a week or two. At last, I finally decide that I can't delay the process any longer, and so I jump right in and start painting.



## 9 Unify the elements

I mix up a pale blue-grey colour and wash it over most of the image, except for those areas that will be directly around the glowing lanterns and the interior of the Queen's moonbeam. A monotone sweep of colour like this will help to unify all the disparate pieces of your image. In addition, if applied properly, it'll give you a good sense of where your light source is going to come into play throughout your image.



## 10 Work up the tree

At this stage of the painting process I'm simply trying to solidify the form of the tree because it's so central – literally and figuratively – to the success of the finished image. Most importantly, I have to establish the depth between the tree and various other pictorial planes that are present in the picture.

## 11 Tease the viewer

Like I said earlier, with so many large and small characters occupying the same composition, you have to be careful to choose which ones to spotlight and which to render in such a way as to make them part of a pattern of secondary discovery for the viewer. The diagonal moonbeams help me do this by throwing the multitude of faerie creatures cavorting through the limbs of the tree into colour silhouette. All those beasties are still there but don't distract the viewer's attention from the central character of the Queen.

## 12 Establish a rhythm

The secondary light sources from the multiple lantern-carrying elves that fly throughout the piece help to establish a visual rhythm into other areas of the piece. They're also subtle enough to not distract the viewer from that moonbeam and its lovely inhabitant. This kind of piece, filled as it is with so many characters, is fun to produce because you can layer in lots of hidden stories among the multitude.

## 13 Place Easter eggs

With a patient eye, you might happen upon the Japanese anime character Totoro, a favourite film of mine, as well as the dragon Balsaad from the Rose series I did for Cartoon Books. I'll leave the rest of these hidden stories for your curious eyes to discover for themselves...

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX Back issues

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## Issue 61 October 2010



We reveal our top 10 rising stars of digital fantasy art, the winner of our cover artist competition, how to bring elements of Frazetta's style into your work and what makes a military robot tick. Plus, learn how to create the ultimate video game bad guy. Don't miss it!

## Issue 62 November 2010



We go horror crazy, giving top tips on how to paint the most gruesome artworks imaginable. We also interview the celebrated Dungeons & Dragons artist Todd Lockwood, and game designer Trevor Truscott lets us have a peek at his Mad Max-influenced sketches.

## Issue 63 December 2010



Discover how to create compelling game art with a host of industry experts, including the talent behind Crysis 2 and Fallout. Plus we meet the artists that make up Steambot Studios and discover how rising star Luke Mancini made the leap from fan artist to pro.

## Issue 64 Christmas 2010



We celebrate the art of Dungeons & Dragons, and talk to the artists who launched the iconic game. Plus: brush up your storyboarding skills, follow our Poser and SketchBook Pro workshops, and join us as we meet the acclaimed book cover artist John Picacio!



## Issue 65 January 2011

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SketchUp



# CREATE 3D MODELS USING SKETCHUP

## Artist PROFILE

**Sunil Pant**  
 COUNTRY: US



After gaining a quantum physics degree in Mumbai, Sunil enrolled in an art school. He then moved to San Francisco, where he's a freelance 3D artist who's worked on high-profile projects that include Iron Man 2 and Megamind. [dgbrain.carbonmade.com](http://dgbrain.carbonmade.com)

**DVD Assets**


The files you need are on your DVD in the Sunil Pant folder.

**SOFTWARE:** Download SketchUp for free at [sketchup.google.com](http://sketchup.google.com)

**Sunil Pant** designs a Steampunk-era military airship with the help of Google's 3D modelling program

**I** use Google SketchUp to help me quickly block out my shapes and get a design that I can look at from all angles. This helps me judge what scale and proportional changes I need to make before I get too deep into the 3D modelling of the design. I think the most

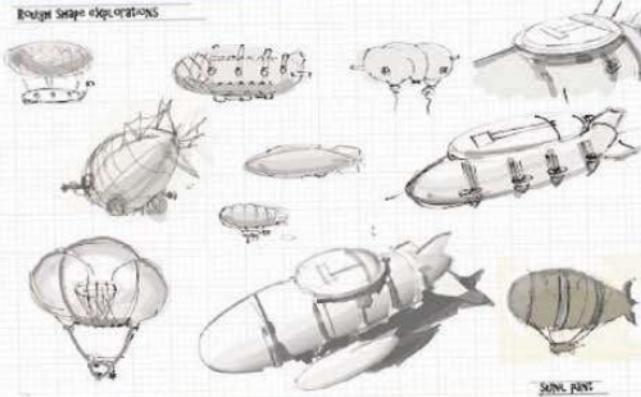
important thing to nail in a design are good proportions and perfect scale. I use Google's SketchUp Pro 7.1 here.

As an artist, it's important to lay down parameters for your work before you start to draw them out on paper. I have some initial thoughts on the image. What's the theme of this design? Is it a modern or

retro airship? Does it comprise nice bevels and clean edges, or gritty and heavy metal parts? How heavy is it? These, in a way, are all the assumptions a viewer makes when they see a design. Asking these questions helps make a good start. In this instance, I've gone for an old-fashioned look as opposed to something modern.

### 1 Do your groundwork

I do as much research as possible on the subject. This phase of design is one of the most important – it gets me in the right frame of mind for the project. I put my reference images of combat vehicles, aircraft, blimps and propellers in front of me before I tackle the airship design.


**Rough Shape explorations**


### 2 Use thumbnail sketches

I like getting my ideas down on paper as quickly as possible. While coming up with a collection of thumbnails I make sure that there's variety in my shapes and forms. It's quite liberating to sketch as many options as I can without spending more than five minutes on each one. At this point, I also have all my photo references to hand, just to give some context to all my doodles.

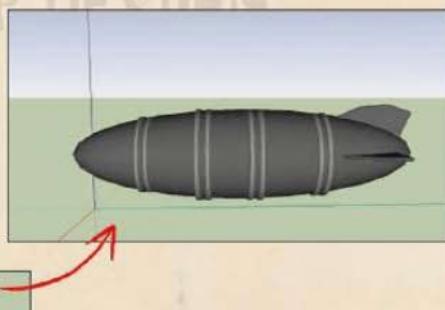
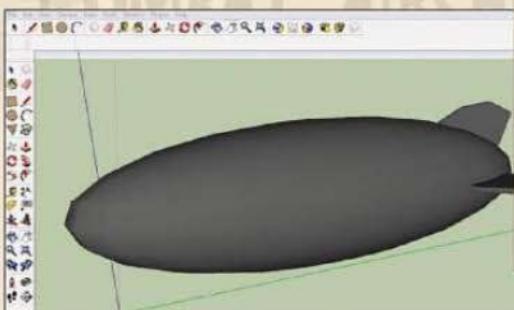
### 3 Refine your choice

I do a layout drawing of the thumbnail that I find the most interesting: it has a simple yet strong look. These ones were done over basic 3D models from SketchUp to maintain the correct perspective. I'm not too concerned with all the details yet, and I approach this part almost as though it were an oil painting, using a few strokes to give a rough idea of the refinements to follow. I'm concerned with the overall shape, proportion and scale of the airship, and how it relates to the forms along its surface.



No. 27. 1932 AT SHIP DESIGN WWI

# Workshops



## 4 Use SketchUp

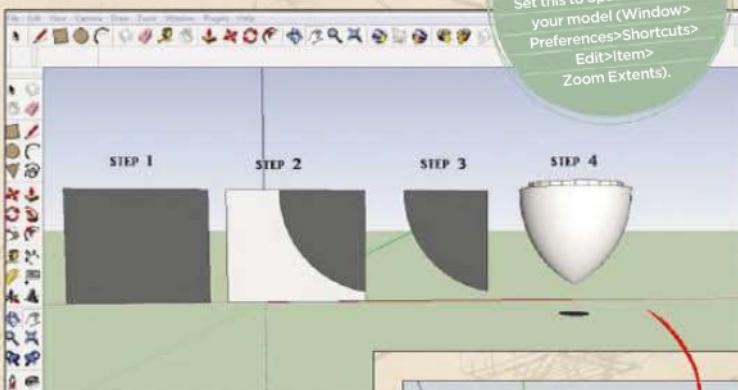
You can see here how I start to block out the airship in simple shapes. This phase in the design process is where I deviate from the approach usually taken by most of my peers. I like using SketchUp as a tool to further figure out any proportion and scale issues. Here, I've started with a primitive sphere and scaled it to fit the airship body. I block out the main shape of the vessel first and add directional fins to distinguish the front from the back.

## 5 Keep parts separate

Building areas in SketchUp is all about cutting and extruding forms. I designate features such as the landing pad and propeller blades as separate files, using the Circle, Scale and Extrude tools. I also introduce four rings over the body surface. These are on tracks that enable the propellers to slide and tilt while the airship is in motion. As a design element, the tracks around the surface also help break up the body of the ship.

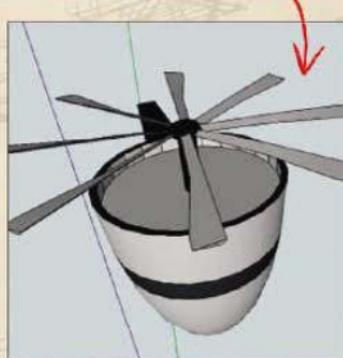


*Shortcuts*  
Zoom Extent  
Space (PC & Mac)  
Set this to Space to explore  
your model (Window>  
Preferences>Shortcuts>  
Edit>Item>  
Zoom Extents).



## 6 Build propellers

I now go in and build the propeller blades, using my real-world reference photos and matching the overall shape as closely to the real thing as possible without adding any details. You can do this by first creating a curve on a plane with the Curve tool. Then create a circle in 3D space using the Circle tool. Highlight the outer ring. Select the Follow Me tool and click the curve surface that you've just created.

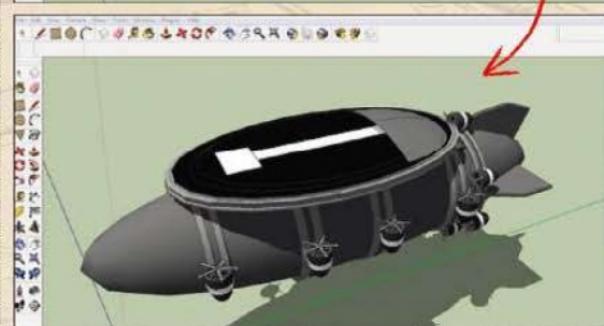
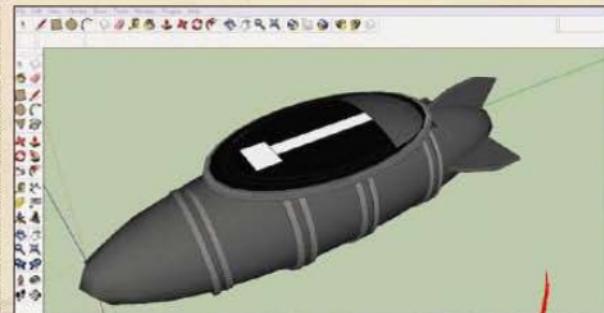


80

ImagineFX February 2011

## 7 Add details

I'm satisfied with the overall shape and start to add in girders and pipes. This gives the airship some scale. The finer the details I put in, the bigger this vessel appears to be. Notice that even though the design already looks detailed, there are still repeating shapes and forms. As such, a viewer can recognise what a shape or form is, rather than trying to make sense of arbitrary elements.



## 8 Introduce shadows

Adding shadows in SketchUp is straightforward because it's all done in real time. Go to Window>Shadow>Shadow Settings. Here, you can play around with the time and date settings and see what works best for your designs. The only advice I'd give here is make sure that your design isn't swamped in shadows, or else it'll end up looking flat.

### PRO SECRETS

**Use other programs**  
SketchUp enables you to import several types of 2D and 3D files using File>Import. This makes it possible to convert my .skp file into an .obj one and then import it to other programs that can handle the format, before further tweaking and editing the model.



# In depth Create 3D models in SketchUp

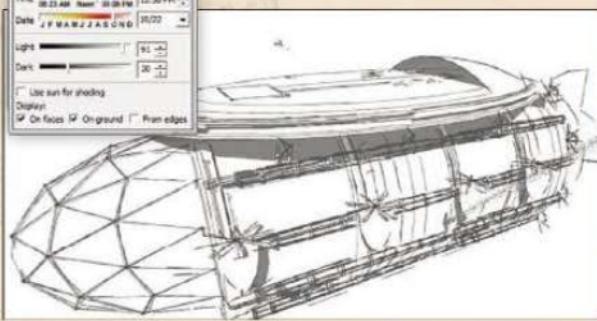
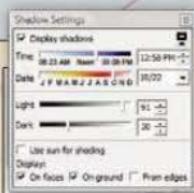
## 9 Use fog to add a degree of realism

Introducing fog is a quick way to add some atmospheric depth to an object. In this case, it offers a way for the airship to be painted into a suitable environment without having to leave SketchUp. Go to Window>Fog>Display Fog. You can place the fog as close to or as far away from the camera as you like. I normally play around with these settings to blur out the horizon line in the distance.



## 11 Enter the 3D Warehouse

After I'm satisfied with the design and shadow layout of the airship, I bring in a few World War I biplanes from the SketchUp Warehouse. You could also incorporate pieces created outside SketchUp that you've created in the past into the scene to add scale and context. Acceptable 2D formats include .jpg, .tif, .png and .bmp, while compatible 3D formats include .3ds, .dwg and .dem.

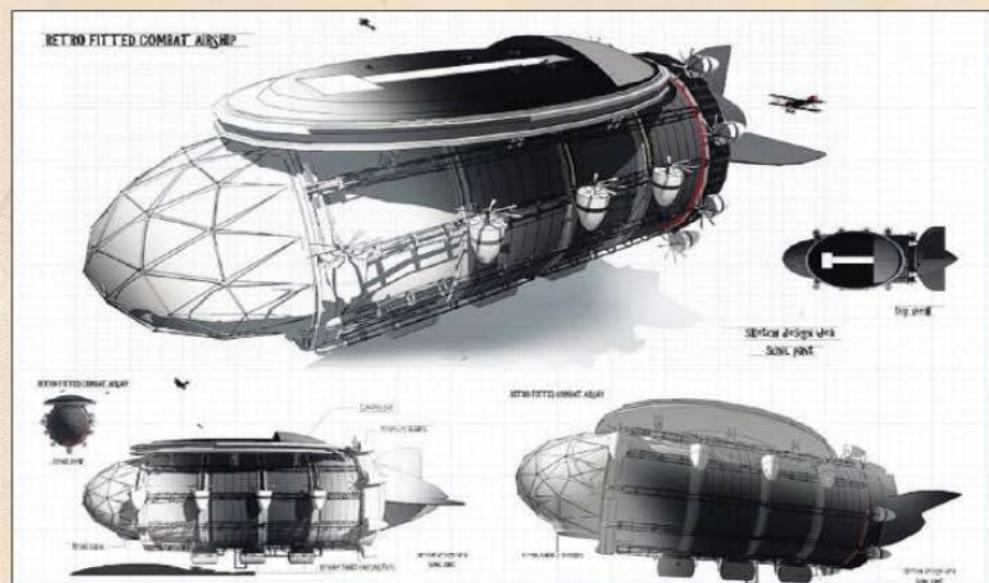
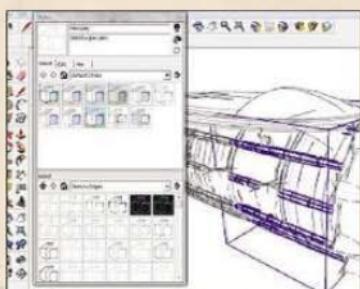


## 12 Import and integrate

I now import the finished piece into Photoshop as a .jpg image. The best way to do this is to go to File>Export>2D Graphic. This helps you save your file out as a .jpg and then work on it further in Photoshop. You could also use other painting software that supports the format.

## 13 Think about presentation

After I've taken all the screengrabs I need of the airship design in SketchUp in .jpg format, I use Photoshop as a tool for presenting the design clearly. Here, I overlay a graph paper texture first, then arrange my work on top of it on a Multiply layer.



## 10 Pick a style

Go to Window>Styles and choose your preference. Sometimes, I use sketchy edges over my layouts to keep them looking fresh. They're also a way to get away from the stiff look that a 3D model can suffer from thanks to default shaders. Note that you might not want to build your model with sketchy edges applied, because that could slow your computer down considerably.

# Workshops



## Undersea lighting

Water diffuses light. This effect is achieved with some basic atmospheric lighting. Painting the distant objects with a gradient fade is a way to depict this lighting. Other aspects of underwater lighting are soft shadows and crepuscular rays. Applying the Radial Blur Filter in Photoshop makes it easy.



## Depicting coral

This was the hardest part of the image. I had no physical samples of coral to examine so I had to use photographs. What I gathered from these references was that coral is really, really complex. I had to simplify their structures so the background didn't take attention away from the girl.

## Paint a story within a story

To keep the viewer interested in an image, always add in little details that could be part of a separate story. The two fish in the corner not only makes for an interesting bit of composition, but brings the mermaid's world to life. These little guys are on their own adventure.

# Photoshop A MERMAID'S TALE

**Jace Wallace** reveals his key techniques for painting an ethereal mermaid, in his image entitled *I Know She is Out There*

**T**his is a privately commissioned piece, where the client gave me almost complete freedom in its creation. The only restriction was that it had to be a mermaid. I added some glam-rock visuals to give the design a unique flair. The client asked for the piece to be done in a similar style to one of my older pictures, *Broken My Heart*. The reference image took heavy inspirations from pop

art, art nouveau and classic Vargas pin-ups. For the new mermaid image I needed to capture that same mix of bright colours and defiant attitude that runs through all three genres. The vibrant colours of ocean fish make for great glam-rock fashion designs.

Once I had decided on a visual style I started to play with different poses. I needed to convey the sexual innocence that's often associated with mermaids.

The pose needed to be confident and relaxed, yet flirty. Conveying the latter aspect was the most difficult, but I settled on her twirling her hair slightly. My final aim was to capture the feeling of being underwater. I had collected plenty of photos from aquariums to study. The diffused lighting is the aspect that struck me the most, and this is what I used to tie the elements of the underwater picture together.



Jace Wallace

COUNTRY: US



A graduate from Ringling College of Art and Design, Jace produces book illustrations, concepts and fashion drawings. He specialises in painting pretty ladies. [www.jacewallace.seeanothing.com](http://www.jacewallace.seeanothing.com)

## How I create... A SUB-AQUATIC SIREN

### 1 Capture the pin-up pose

A pin-up's pose is everything. It's the subtle curves that make the female form attractive. Portions should be exaggerated and stylised. Heads are made larger while the legs and arms might be extended. The characters would look silly if they were to become real, but as an illustration they look right.



### 2 Lighting effects

I always start with very rough and vague lighting. It's important not to get caught up in the details quite yet. This enables me to easily make changes without wasting too much time. I use round soft brushes for the most part, but for this image I experiment with textures brushes.



### 3 Tackle the surroundings

An engaging environment gives a character an added bit of depth. Furthermore, a universal style for the character and environment makes the image more convincing. Subtle bubbles and light reflections that come off the tail is a simple but effective way to bring the image together.

*Gimp*

# GENERATE SCARY CREATURE DESIGNS



**Andrea Bianco** paints a mutant that's the stuff of nightmares, using the popular open-source package GIMP

## Artist PROFILE

**Andrea Bianco**  
COUNTRY: Italy



Andrea is a concept artist, illustrator and photographer. When he's not creating art, he plays guitars in various musical projects and tries to learn new languages. [www.lostconnection.net](http://www.lostconnection.net)

### DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Andrea Bianco folder in the Workshops section.

## ON THE DVD

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

GIMP

AB RAKE 02

This is a great brush for adding dynamism to surfaces, suggesting flow on volumes and keeping sketches fresh.

AB PAINT 07

The oil-like brush that I use most often, among the ones that I've created for GIMP. It has a nice bristle flow and works wonderfully for blending.

T

here's a common belief that using expensive software is required to achieve great, professional-looking results. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many inexpensive, free or open-source packages are powerful enough for creating top-notch art. We all know how good Photoshop and Painter are, but this doesn't mean they're the only way of expressing ourselves and eventually getting our art seen commercially. Blender, GIMP, SketchUp, Wings 3D and ArtRage are just a few of the most

famous names when it comes to free or inexpensive creative software, and they all feature plenty of power and functionality. What's even better is that most of them are multi-platform, so you can use them on Windows, Mac or Linux.

In this workshop, I'll show you that GIMP has many features that make it perfect for speed painting and illustration in general. The program manages brush opacity in a similar way to Photoshop; it has custom brush support; and it can read Photoshop brushes (although it doesn't yet support all the brush parameters of

the ABR format). GIMP can be configured to suit your needs and expanded with countless plug-ins, scripts and presets. Indeed, some users have even developed cool free add-ons to make GIMP more suitable for natural painting. There's an awesome community of GIMP users out there, and you're sure to find help if you're stuck or just looking to expand your knowledge of the program.

So, let's take GIMP for a little speed-painting ride! How do you fancy doing some concept work for an imaginary survival horror game?



### 1 Put your stamp on GIMP's workspace

The first thing I like to do is to set up a GIMP workspace that fits my specific project's needs. So I spend a bit of time customising the GUI, moving windows here and there, docking them to each other, changing the interface theme and so on. All this helps to streamline my creative process. Using GIMP will become easier if you get accustomed to its non-standard shortcuts – and even more so if you decide to set-up some shortcuts of your own. My advice is to explore, customise and make the program yours!



### 2 Produce thumbnails

I can now start working on my concept. My task for this project is to provide a three-quarter view of an ugly, anthropomorphic mutant, which will feature in a post-apocalyptic survival horror product. I usually have two ways for starting a concept: one is using drawings, and the other is blocking

shapes and defining them. For this workshop, I decide to follow the latter path, so I explore various shapes until something interesting emerges that I feel I can use. I keep the thumbnails rough so that there's room for some happy accidents. It also means I don't fall in love with a particular shape, which might blinker my outlook on the task.

In depth Scary creature design



# Workshops

## Shortcuts

### Alter brush size

Press / and \* (PC & Mac)  
I created this shortcut so  
that I'd be able to change  
the size of my brush  
on the fly.



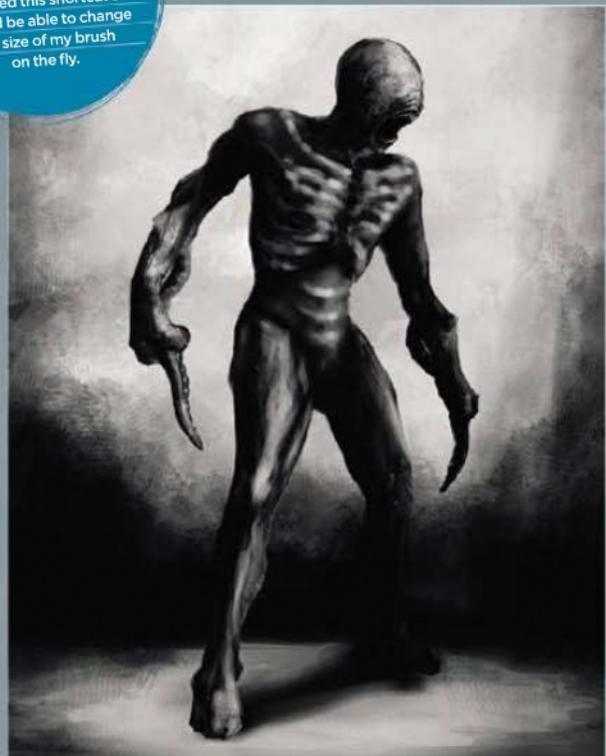
### 3 Setting the mood

When I feel I've generated enough thumbnail ideas, I can start the actual piece. I like to paint a simple background to help me lay down values and define a mood for the image. I suggest using mostly static brushes for this stage: animated brushes need a lot of memory and they'll become unresponsive when their sizes grow, especially if they comprise a lot of frames. For blocking the background, I use the Galaxy Big standard GIMP brush and a few custom brushes, and patterns to add dynamism.



### 4 Start painting

After the sketching phase, I choose a thumbnail and bring it into my painting on a separate layer. I then resize it and start blocking the basic values over it. Avoid zooming in and getting lost in details: concentrate on getting the mood and values working as well as possible. There'll be time later for adding details when the pose is better established.



### 5 Make initial tweaks

I keep tweaking the pose and checking it with constant horizontal flipping of the canvas, which I've associated with my own shortcut, Ctrl+Alt+H. This tweaking is making me lose textures and details, but it's no big deal. They're just useful for establishing the concept in my mind, and few of them will make it to the final image.



### 6 Focus on key areas

I spend time refining and adding a few rough details to the parts that I want to jump out at the viewer: the head, the torso and the weird design of the hands. I also tweak the background. For this stage, I use the Pattern tool and custom patterns. I recommend creating your own patterns, brushes and texture – they'll help you to develop your unique style.

## PRO SECRETS

### Create your own studio

Don't just harvest the net for downloadable content: spend time creating your own brushes, presets, scripts, patterns, textures and so on. Before you know it, you'll have built up a great collection of custom tools that will help you tackle different projects in an original and satisfying manner.



### 7 Fixing inconsistencies

Painting some planes on a separate layer is a great way to study values and fix parts that are looking odd because of either a conflict or inconsistency. I apply this technique to the torso and later I'll do the same for the face and hands.



### 8 Introducing patterns

Using the patterns mixed with different brushes, I bring back some detail into the model. I also edit the head and some other parts of the creature. The patterns technique isn't always a good idea, because it can easily alter the values. However, if used carefully it can help to build great textures quickly. I often use it for creating pseudo-random texture ideas that I can then develop by hand.

### 9 Remain detached

Don't worry about removing a nicely painted part if it's not a good design. I get rid of most of the details and use IWarp to shape some of the body parts. It's GIMP's version of Photoshop's Liquify tool – use it to correct perspective problems and shape your subjects.

# In depth Scary creature design

## 10 Eyeing up my options

Even though the original concept sketches depict a creature with no eyes, I start thinking that it's a waste to have that huge, empty surface – especially as the eye area usually allows for interesting shapes and volumes. I decide to add an eye as a placeholder.



## 11 Design discussions

After various tests, I decide to go back to the eyeless design, but to paint scarred skin that covers the eye area, which is connected to a net of veins. This can lead to design discussions about the nature of our subject, because the eyes exist but are hidden under a body part and thus probably useless.



## 12 Selection options

Another important feature in GIMP is the Lasso Select tool. Drag it and it becomes a lasso, then click to bring up the Poly Selection tool, both in the same selection. How great is that? I often use it for selecting parts that need to be moved around and to create a defined selection that needs to be painted. I also use it for creating planes of values.



## 13 Rein in the details

I decide to simplify some parts that were stuffed with pointless details and textures. The chest area looks empty, so I paint a basic ribs-like surface on a different layer and mix it with the original painting, erasing and adding shadows and highlights until I'm happy.



## 14 Get used to zooming

I step up a gear and lay down some details in the parts that I think are crucial for this particular character, especially the arms and face. I zoom in and out to check the details: they'll often look wonderfully rendered close up, and totally wrong when the image is seen at full size.

## 15 Take the long view

I keep flipping the canvas and zooming out the image, because something looks wrong. I find it useful to get up and walk away from the monitor while keeping the image at 1:1 scale in full-screen view. It seems to help me spot values and perspective issues. I find some problems around the head area and also decide to make it reflect more light.



## 16 Colour options

In the beginning, I wanted to keep the concept within a monochrome range, but now something tells me to go for more aggressive colours. The image is heavily contrasted and has a dramatic lighting scheme, so I feel that an unnatural colour scheme will push the effect even more. I start working with blues and greens for the background and an orange/violet mix for the skin.



## 17 Layer management

Adding the colours means a lot of layers are created and combined. Organise your layers and keep their number at a minimum to avoid confusion. This also saves on processing power.

## 18 Suggesting a story

While I'm adding colours, I decide to paint some red here and there to suggest damage. I think it would be great to add a wound more or less on the hip and some gore effects on the jaws and tentacle-like structure. This way, we can get a glimpse of the brutal violence this guy is capable of.



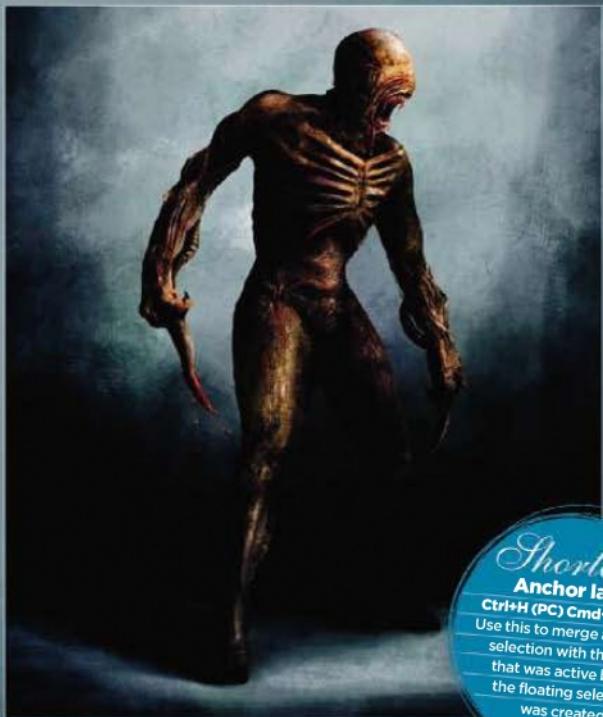
## PRO SECRETS

### Go deep

GIMP was designed by programmers rather than artists, and that's one of the reasons why so many of its more powerful features are hidden among nested menus and folder structures. Spend some time exploring the software, its standard and third-party plug-ins, the amazing script system, the folder organisation, and so on. You'll discover a host of features that will speed up your workflow and open up a world of creative opportunities.

## 19 Signing off the concept

I add the name I've decided to give to the creature, some more text and my signature. The presentation is kept at a minimum because I want to make the contrast in colour the main feature of the concept. The final image could be the basis for a more polished illustration, if necessary.



## Shortcuts

### Anchor layer

**Ctrl+H (PC) Cmd+H (Mac)**  
Use this to merge a floating selection with the layer that was active before the floating selection was created.

## 20 Don't stop now!

I've only used a small selection of GIMP's features: there are many more tools that could make your work faster and richer. Explore the software and mess around, learn from your mistakes and create custom content. This is a great way to learn how to paint with GIMP.

Sharpen your type skills – leading agencies redefine the role of typography

# computer arts

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*Art.Rage*

# PREPARING AN ARTRAGE CANVAS



Discover how to prepare and tweak your canvas with ArtRage's authentic media simulation. **Simon Dominic** is your guide

**A**rtRage is able to simulate the qualities of real canvas, enabling you to define dimensions, colours and textures. If you intend to print your image then it's essential to understand PPI (sometimes called DPI). PPI stands for

pixels per inch, and is the number of pixels that span a printed inch of image. Printed dimensions (inches) equal image dimensions (pixels) divided by PPI. So an image of 900x600 pixels at 300PPI will print at 3x2 inches. ArtRage helps you out here, as we'll see.

## 1 Setting dimensions

It's important to specify your dimensions, and you have two methods for selecting canvas size. With Screen Size selected, enter the pixel dimensions and PPI, and the printed size will pop up below. Alternatively, select Print Size and enter the physical print size and PPI; pixel dimensions are then displayed. The menu on the top right enables you to select and save your presets.



## 2 Choosing your canvas

Click the Canvas Preview window to reveal the canvas options. Set Opacity, Metallic Effect, Roughness and Grain Size (1). Click the Colour swatch (2) to choose a hue and the Grain swatch (3) to select a texture. View the presets in the panel to the right (4). They're bundled according to the groups in the centre. Add Group (5) creates a new group. Select OK to apply.



## 3 Resizing your canvas

You may want to alter your canvas attributes after starting work. Choose Edit->Resize the Painting to resample the entire image. Use the Screen and Print options as in step one. If you want to reduce or extend the canvas without resizing the image, use Edit->Crop->Expand the Canvas. Enter the new size and either drag your image to the desired place or use the positioning presets.

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Simon Dominic**  
COUNTRY: England

Simon is a self-taught professional illustrator who specialises in fantasy and horror. He's worked on game card art, covers and more.  
[www.painterly.co.uk](http://www.painterly.co.uk)

## CUSTOMISE THE ARTRAGE CANVAS



### A. Screen size

Press this to switch to pixel dimensions entry. Do this if you don't intend to print.

### B. Print size

Choose to enter physical print sizes here.

### C. Canvas dimensions

Displays dimensions either in pixels or physical units, depending on whether Screen size or Print size is chosen.

### D. Canvas Presets menu

You can either select or create new size presets here.

### E. Canvas proportions

Select Tick to maintain width-to-height ratio, or Cross to enter them individually.

### F. Choose PPI value

Enter your PPI. This box shifts position when option B (Print Size) is chosen.

### G. Positioning presets

This enables rapid placement of your image on the new canvas.

### H. Positioning window

Drag your image within the window to put it roughly in its new frame.

Photoshop

# PAINT IN THE STYLE OF ASHLEY WOOD

Channel the techniques of celebrated illustrator Ashley Wood and capture the look of traditional paintings with **Robert Kim's** guidance

**O**ne artist who's made a big impact on how I approach my art is the acclaimed illustrator Ashley Wood, who's bringing the traditional medium back into the mainstream conscience with his expressive paintings. What attracts me to his work is his bold use of brush works that celebrates the traditional way of painting, rather than downplaying it for the digital medium. There's a certain magic to seeing real paint interacting on a

canvas that the artist has utilised to its full potential, creating a look that's unique and instantly recognisable.

I wanted to take this opportunity to share my experience in studying Ashley's work and try to capture some of his essence in the digital format. Note that this isn't a guide to copying the artist's style; I don't presume to know his techniques, nor do I think there's a point to doing such a thing. My wish is to take the principles of working traditionally and

apply it to my own paintings, hopefully evolving as an artist in the process.

The focus of this workshop is using texture brushes in expressive ways to create interesting effects that aren't usually seen in digital art. Keep in mind that all of this is just icing on the cake; the crux of what makes Ashley's or any artist's work great is mastering basic principles such as lighting, colour and design. I encourage everyone to study from life as well as other traditional painters for inspiration.

## 1 Robot thoughts

I first became aware of Ashley Wood's work through his robot designs from the World War Robot art book series. To pay tribute to that, I thought I'd create my own military-themed robot scene. I had in mind a bipedal walking tank – it's not the most practical design in the world, but I wanted something that's not too serious, while still being deadly.



## 2 Initial sketch

I like to start off every painting with a black and white under-drawing. Because I'm not worrying about colours I can quickly establish the direction of light and composition of the scene. I'm keeping things rough for now because I'll be painting over this in colour and making changes. You could render everything in greyscale all the way to the finished image, then apply colour at the very end. I find, however, that working with colours early on is necessary to have them mixing in a more organic way towards completion.

## Artist PROFILE

**Robert Kim**  
COUNTRY: Canada



Robert's a freelance artist who specialises in character and environment illustration. His goal is to publish his own book of concept art. [roboto-kun.deviantart.com](http://roboto-kun.deviantart.com)

## DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the Robert Kim folder in the Workshops section.

## PRO SECRETS

### Using Color Balance

You can quickly add colour to a greyscale image by using the Color Balance layer (Layer > New Adjustment Layers > Color Balance). The advantage of using this tool is its ability to change colours in three different levels: highlight, mid-tone and shadows. You can create as many colour balance layers as you need and blend them together using the alpha channel.

## 3 Texture brush

There are many useful resources online, including some great texture brushes. Here, I've gathered some brushes that mimic the look of real paintbrush strokes. The trick is to use them like stamps, making sure not to repeat the same shape too many times. For this reason it's a good idea to keep a variety of different brush shapes handy, so that you can find the right one for specific situations. I'm also using an all-purpose round texture brush for the majority of the painting, because using the texture brushes can be limiting at times. Keep in mind that on top of changing the size and opacity of the brush shapes, you can also rotate them for more flexibility.



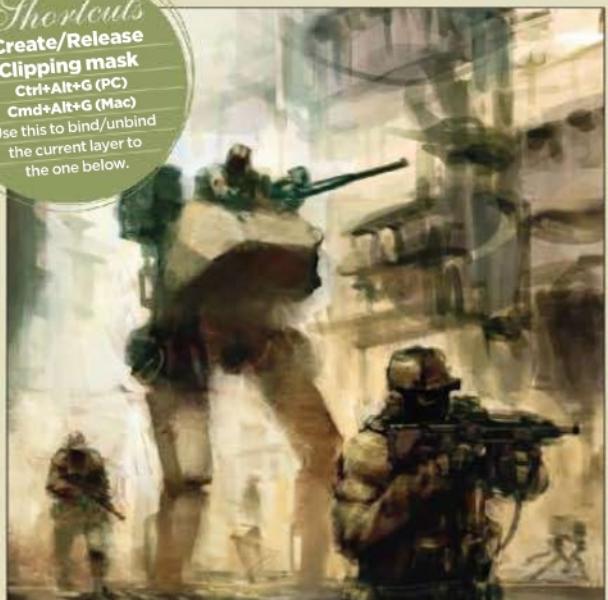
In depth Paint like Ashley Wood



# Workshops

## Shortcuts

Create/Release  
Clipping mask  
Ctrl+Alt+G (PC)  
Cmd+Alt+G (Mac)  
Use this to bind/unbind  
the current layer to  
the one below.



## PRO SECRETS

### Alter your brushes

You can change the properties of your brush on the fly using the Brush palette. In the Brush Tip shape menu you can change and rotate the brush shape, which gives you greater flexibility when using texture brushes. Another useful feature is the dual brush tab, which enables you to combine two brushes to create one super brush. Keep this palette open for easy access, if you can spare the screen space.

### 4 Adding colour

Still keeping things loose, I add colours on a new layer. One thing that I learned from Ashley's work is that you can achieve a lot using neutral, harmonious colours, while reserving bright and saturated colours to highlight key areas. It's important to avoid making your scene look monochromatic by balancing out the amount of warm and cool tones. While the overall tone of this scene is leaning towards warm yellow colours, I'm putting a touch of cool colours in areas unaffected by the light source. Using texture brushes makes it easier to blend colours in a more organic-looking way, while also creating some nice effects that I can preserve and build on top of towards the finished stage.



### 5 Solidifying shapes

I'm a firm believer of the 'less is more' approach to mechanical design, and use big, angular shapes to create the robot's silhouette. It's crucial that the viewer can tell what the function of the design is just by looking at the silhouette. I've added a box-like shape on the side to create asymmetry and balance out the machine gun. I've settled on an extra ammo container, but you could make it into anything from a fuel tank to a missile pod. In the end it's all about the shapes.

### 6 Improving the composition

Because this scene is more about the robot walker, I've decided to get rid of the character in the foreground altogether, so I can show the machine more prominently without anything obscuring it. Instead of simply erasing the unwanted stuff and losing all the work you've done up to that point, painting over it can create some interesting texture patterns in the process that you can preserve throughout the painting.



### 7 Adding human figures

This is where referencing soldiers can come in handy, taking note of how they hold their weapons while running or walking, and their military gear. Because they're far away I simplify while keeping their pose clear to read. I think about what kind of silhouette they create from a distance. I'm focusing on the big shapes, figuring out where light would hit and cast shadow.



### 9 Building on top

I prefer working on a single layer and keep building on top rather than placing different elements on their own layers. When I'm unsure of something I'll work on a new layer, then either merge it back into the original layer or delete it. This approach can be inconvenient, but I find that it forces me to think more like a traditional painter who doesn't have the luxury of an Undo button.

### 10 Atmospheric distortion

Objects further away have reduced levels of contrast and detail because they're obscured by air molecules. We can greatly exaggerate this effect because it's a depiction of a battlefield with thick smokes everywhere. This is a good way to separate different elements in the foreground and background, by showing a sense of distance.



# In depth Paint like Ashley Wood



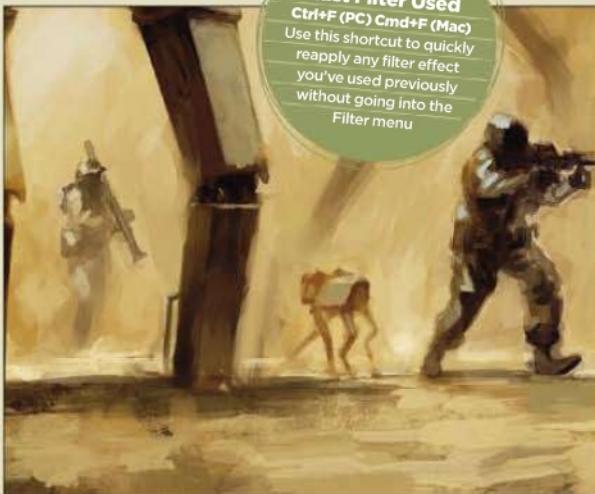
## 11 Pushing contrast

Maximising the degree of contrast between light and dark generally makes for a more dynamic painting. I try to stage the direction of light so that the main subject in focus – in this case the robot walker – has the most contrast using cast shadow. That said, try to avoid having too many pure black or pure white areas, because it's not an accurate representation of how things look in real life. Just as a reminder, objects further away tend to be lighter in value, while those closer to the foreground tend to be darker.

## 12 Decal design

Adding graphics is a fun way to push the sense of realism and draw the eye to a certain area. I didn't want anything too gaudy, because these are combat vehicles rather than race cars. Working with an alpha channel and a quick mask ensures that I have clean edges on the original graphics while I scratch them out and apply wear and tear with a texture

brush. Even if they're barely visible, keeping their edges sharp is key to making them look believable.



## 13 Ground texture

This is where I can go nuts with the texture brushes. I can be very expressive to the point of being abstract. Once again, I'm making sure to not repeat the same shape too much by varying the size and rotation of different brush patterns. The general rule of lighting still applies here: be mindful of where light hits the ground and where cast shadows occur.

## 14 Depict smoke

Try being expressive with your brush strokes when painting smoke. There isn't a perfect approach to smoke, because much like clouds it depends on the specific scene's requirements. As a rule of thumb, think in big shapes and avoid repeating the same pattern too often. It helps to think of smoke as series of spheres or bubbles fused together with their own bright spots and cast shadows.



## 15 Modifying the design

Getting further into the painting, I realise there's something more menacing about an autonomous, walking death machine. Studying tanks and armoured vehicles is a great way to come up with subtle design touches that make the design seem more functional, even if it may just be pure fiction.



## 16 Battle damage

Since these robots would have used in countless battles, there would suffer from wear and tear. I focus mostly on corners and where two edges meet because that's where damage is most likely to occur. Grainy texture brushes help to create a generally worn-out, rusty surface. Applying spots of bright colours makes the rest of the surface look significantly more worn out and discoloured by contrast. Keep in mind gravity for any moisture-related effects, such as runny paint or patches of rust.

## 17 Finishing up

I create a custom texture layer set to Overlay and apply more of the texture brush stamp in certain spots. Setting the layer mode to Overlay enables me to preserve the work I've done underneath while also increasing the colour contrast in that area. I don't get too carried away though, because overdoing it could make the painting confusing to read and undo all the progress I've made up to this point. I can apply a texture and then erase parts of it away if the effect is too strong.

ON THE DVD

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:  
ROUND BRUSH HARD  
TEXTURELEVEL1

This brush is good for any situation. It creates a subtle texture effect to prevent things from looking too clean. I use this for the majority of the painting, especially when tackling the finer details present.

#### TEXTUREBRUSH\_1

I have a whole range of brush stroke texture brushes to create the paint-on-canvas effect, including some created by Seu Davi ([seudavi.deviantart.com](http://seudavi.deviantart.com)). Use them like stamps and mix and match them as required.



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Next month in...

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

IMAGINE





### ***Jim Lee kicks up a storm!***

DC and Wildstorm's superstar artist sketches a frenzy of superheroes!

## The March issue packs an artistic punch!

### ***Comic masterclass – bring your stories to life!***

Discover and master the key Golden Rules of comic creation with Tommy Lee Edwards.

### ***Bill Sienkiewicz interviewed!***

The Eisner award-winning artist behind Elektra and New Mutants reveals all!

### ***Adam Hughes extravaganza!***

The king of pin-up art paints Catwoman and discusses DC's covers.

**ISSUE 67 ON SALE 8 FEBRUARY 2011**

# Workshops

*Traditional skills*

# THE ART OF DRAWING

## PART ONE: THEORY

Neglect your traditional drawing skills at your peril! Master artist **Justin Gerard** reveals how they can improve your art

### Artist PROFILE

**Justin Gerard**  
COUNTRY: US



Justin has travelled the world in search of the perfect medium to paint in. He's not found it, but along the way he's met some fascinating people, seen some interesting places and had a chance to paint a lot of great subjects. He enjoys good music, chocolate chip cookies and tank battles.

[www.justingerard.com](http://www.justingerard.com)

### DVD Assets

Justin's sketches are on the disc, in the Workshop section.

**T**here are two sides to art: the emotional and the technical. While they're both equally important, here we're concerning ourselves with the technical aspect of art, which is objective and can be taught with precision to almost anyone. The emotional aspects are less scientific and better left to be discovered rather than taught.

Drawing is the fundamental core of good illustration. Without good drawing an illustration may have a lot of heart, but will have no brains. In the development of my approach to drawing, I've found the following two books to be of immense value: Bridgeman's Life Drawing by George B. Bridgeman, and Drawing Course by Charles Bargue with the collaboration of Jean-Léon Gérôme.

## WHAT SHOULD I DRAW?

What to draw will be determined mostly by what each artist is interested in. But whatever this may be, there are some things that every artist should be extremely familiar with drawing.

The most important thing to know how to draw is the human form, and specifically the hands and face. The study of these is extremely important if you're planning on communicating with humans. If you're doing art for semi-aquatic reptilians then this may not be for you.



### Studies from life

Drawing from life is like doing knuckle push-ups for the artist's mind. As well as improving hand-eye coordination, it also helps build a deeper understanding of how light and shadow fall across a solid form. Communicating the illusion of reality via a thorough understanding of light is integral for the artist.



## Building a visual vocabulary

When you draw from life you develop a visual vocabulary, made up of all the things you've ever drawn. As you draw a face, your mind remembers the lines and shapes. Later, as you draw from your imagination you'll find that you can recall these lines that you've memorised. If you're an artist who really enjoys drawing from his imagination then drawing from life is even more important, so that the ideas you're communicating are grounded in reality.

### The importance of human faces

The human face is the most important study for the artist. The human brain dedicates a considerable amount of energy to recognising the patterns of muscles on other human faces, to gather the deeper aspects of what they're saying and to gauge their responses.

Because of this inherent study of faces, a face will always be the most interesting aspect of an image and will be the first place that most people look at.

Therefore, knowing how to draw faces properly is paramount among the tools every artist needs.

“Knowing how to draw faces properly is paramount among the tools every artist needs”

### The importance of human form

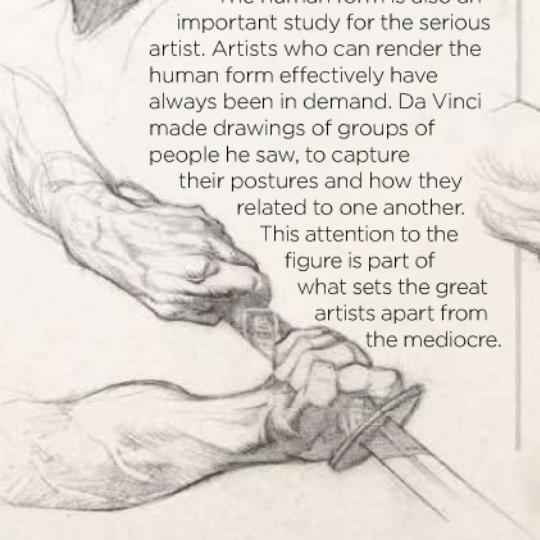
The human form is also an important study for the serious artist. Artists who can render the human form effectively have always been in demand. Da Vinci made drawings of groups of people he saw, to capture their postures and how they related to one another.

This attention to the figure is part of what sets the great artists apart from the mediocre.



### The importance of animals

Humans are all well and good, but sometimes you find yourself drawing things that aren't quite human. In a word, aliens. When doing this, it's important that you ground your work in reality. You want your ideas to be believable, or at least anatomically possible. One of the best ways to do this is to make studies from real animals. By memorising the forms of animals from this planet, you'll be better equipped to draw those from another planet.



# Workshops



## SO HOW DO I DRAW?

There's no single correct way to draw. However, certain methods have proven to be effective at producing good art. These methods aren't mysteries. They're readily available, and all you need is time, dedication and a few library late fees to master the technical aspects of drawing.



### Imagine before you draw

Before you place any lines on your paper, try to see in your mind what the image is going to look like on the paper. You don't want to haphazardly throw down lines at random. Then, when you do begin, start with very light lines to establish the shapes.

### Draw what you see in front of you

When drawing from life, try to remain true to what you're actually seeing. Later on you can go wild from your imagination, and your art will always be stronger if in your studies you have worked hard to be as faithful as possible to your subject matter. Remember that you want – and need – to ground your creations in reality.

*Imagine the lines on the page, study the subject in front of you and then start drawing. It's that simple.*

### Committing to memory

One of the goals of drawing from life is to memorise the details and the general construction of your subjects, enabling you to recall them later when creating your images. Your drawings don't need to be perfect photographic representations, but they shouldn't be caricatures either. When you're finished, you should come away with a better understanding of the construction of the forms and their details. You'll then be able to communicate them with emotion, and not be hampered by a lack of technical resources.

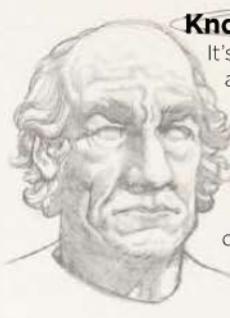


“When drawing from life, try to remain true to what you're actually seeing”



### Why not just trace photographs?

Some artists trace photographs to achieve these ends. This is usually done in the interest of saving time. If you decide to go this route then you'd derive some understanding of shape and detail. However, I think the final results are less interesting and have less personality than freehand drawings. Tracing a photograph is never going to be as helpful in truly understanding the construction of the forms. The drawings where I've had to fight my way through are always the strongest and most visually interesting.



### Knowing when to stop rendering

It's not necessary to render your entire image as a camera. The illustrator's purpose in these studies from life is not to compete with photography – what would be the point? It's more important to capture the idea of a thing, its shape and form, and the overall sense of its surface and details, rather than recreate a perfect photo.

*Drawing an object isn't the same as taking a photograph of it. You're communicating something beyond the subject's mere physical form.*

### Refine an image from a previous study

As you work and rework to solve a difficult problem in an image, you may notice that your drawing becomes quite messy. There are many things artists do to solve this, but I prefer one of two courses of action. If the unnecessary lines are light, erase out what's unnecessary and/or bulk up the lines that are the most important. This will also minimise the stray lines. However, if the unnecessary lines have hopelessly overtaken the drawing then transfer the drawing, either by vellum, serial graphite or light table. When retracing an image, simplify a shape down to what's most essential. The goal is to nail fewer, stronger lines as you refine your drawing.

### Simplifying shapes

Part of the illustration process is knowing what to leave out of your image. We only have so much time available, and choices have to be made on what details we'll add or leave out. One small shadow may be vitally important, while another may be visually confusing. Simplifying the shapes will give an image more clarity.

### Rendering details

If everything is equally detailed an image becomes flat. The crocodile is covered in scales, but only some of these scales are necessary to communicate the feeling of its scaly hide to the viewer. The sharpest details in your drawing should be reserved for the focal areas; leave the details that are outside these areas as suggestions. The viewer's imagination, using what you've provided them in the detail areas, will be able to fill in the gaps themselves.

**“The sharpest details in your drawing should be reserved for the focal areas, such as the eyes or hands”**

*Save time and use the power of artistic suggestion to indicate details in your drawing without having to meticulously draw them.*

### Use shadows to your advantage

The inside of shadows should be vague and transparent, not cluttered and detailed. You'll notice that in a final image, the shadows always support the focal point: they recede so that the focal areas in the light can come forward. Learning to frame your key areas with shadows in this way brings great rewards. If you get this right then your image's crucial areas will stand out.

### PRACTICAL ADVICE

In next month's concluding part, Justin shares his knowledge of thumbnailing, character studies and digital comps. **Don't miss it!**

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# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

# ImagineFX

# Reviews



## Artist's Choice Award

Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



### SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

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Wacom's impressive graphics tablet is liberated by the loss of its wires.

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Add weather effects to images.

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This user-friendly tool makes game development more accessible.

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**RATINGS EXPLAINED** Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious

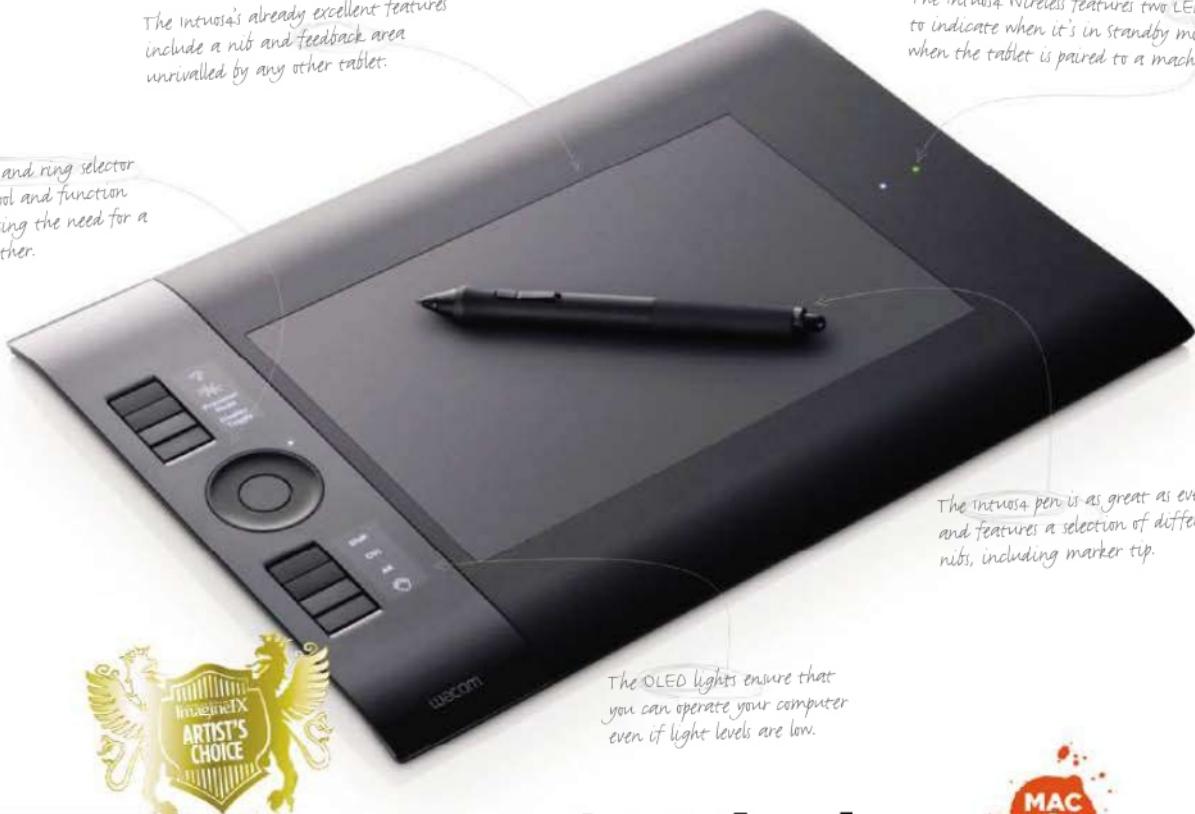
The ExpressKeys and ring selector are fantastic tool and function shortcuts, bypassing the need for a keyboard altogether.

The Intuos4's already excellent features include a nib and feedback area unrivalled by any other tablet.

The Intuos4 Wireless features two LED lights to indicate when it's in standby mode and when the tablet is paired to a machine.



By losing the wires, Wacom has reinvented the workflow of the Intuos. It now provides a far more satisfying and productive drawing experience.



## Intuos4 Wireless



**BREAKING FREE** Losing its wires only strengthens the Wacom Intuos4's impressive drawing capabilities

Price £307 Company Wacom Web [www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com) Contact Via web

**W**hen Wacom unveiled its Intuos4 range of graphics tablets last year, it won award after award – and rightly so. Here was a tablet that merged phenomenal pen feedback and a natural drawing action with genuinely supportive control options. The Intuos4's OLED Express Keys and ring selector were ingenious, delivering the type of fast brush, tool and size selections that make digital drawing a true joy.

Yet there was no disguising the fact that for all of its good points, the Intuos4 remained

hardwired to your computer. Finally, Wacom has unleashed the tablet via a Bluetooth link, and such a simple introduction has breathed new life into an already brilliant product.

There's no difference between the wired and wireless versions of this tablet, bar a detachable USB cable that doubles as a charger, a Bluetooth radio and the minor weight addition of a lithium ion battery. The underbelly of the

The Intuos4 Wireless has the same spec as the regular Intuos, but with an added lithium ion battery.

A small Bluetooth radio switch pairs the Intuos4 wirelessly with your machine.



Wacom's ExpressKeys and ring selector are just as responsive over a wireless connection as with traditional USB connected offering.

Intuos now has a small housing where the replaceable battery resides. This charges via a regular USB cable, meaning you can leave it plugged in to your machine overnight for a charge or, should you be low on energy, begin working in wired mode and pop it free once charged. We found that the battery life is impressive. Bluetooth radios are notoriously energy-hungry, but the Intuos puts itself to sleep when no input is detected, prolonging the

turning Bluetooth on and pairing the device. A small Bluetooth switch on the side of the Intuos governs its controls, but otherwise it's simple to get your machine and the Intuos talking.

All of this underlines the build quality in Wacom's products. What can't be communicated through mere specifications is just how liberating the wireless Intuos is. In use, the lack of a hardwired cable means you can spin the pad on your lap, switch drawing

## Using the Intuos4 Wireless is a liberating experience, and all for just £30 more than the wired version

work cycle. As such, a heavy eight-hour session from a single charge is easily achievable.

Like all Bluetooth devices paired with a computer, it can take a while to respond when awakened from sleep mode. Anyone who uses a Bluetooth mouse will recognise the familiar few seconds of shaking and scribbling as the device pairs with the machine. On the whole, however, the pairing between the Intuos and our test machine was rock solid. The pairing procedure itself is straightforward. On the Mac it's merely a question of

positions with ease and work in pretty much any pose you fancy, up to 30 feet away from your machine. After a while you even dispense with the notion of a tablet altogether; you're drawing on a tablet with such excellent feedback and freedom of movement that, as long as you can see the screen well enough, is akin to pen and paper art creation. It truly is a liberating experience, and all for just £30 more than the wired version. You may not know what you've got 'til it's gone, but in this instance, that's a good thing.

### ARTIST INTERVIEW

## DAVE KENDALL

*Freelance artist Dave Kendall advocates turning to a tablet*

### How does a tablet compare to traditional drawing methods?

On the Cintiq the feel is similar to traditional working. The Intuos has more disconnect, but that can be used as a positive aspect. For instance, the ability to sit back and relax with the Intuos is a nice change from the intimacy of a Cintiq. Sometimes I find it easier to paint with the Intuos, but the Cintiq rules for me when drawing.

### What are the advantages for using a tablet in artwork?

I'd say the advantages come from using digital media rather than the fact I use a tablet. I'm finishing off book one of a graphic novel project for Soleil. There are usually many panels on the page and I find blowing up the panels to a large size gives me a freedom to compose and tell the story with confidence. It has none of the claustrophobia of panel boundaries if working traditionally at near-print size.

### How comfortable do you find working with a tablet?

I had my first Intuos 1 tablet 10 years ago, and it was tricky at first to get the hang of looking at the screen rather than your hand, but it was soon second nature.

### Do you think tablets are sound investments for fantasy artists?

I'd say they're an essential purchase even for the retouching of traditional work. It depends on your budget but I'd say having an Intuos is a must, and may be everything you need from an input device. I'd recommend trying a Cintiq before you part with serious cash, as you may not need it.

DETAILS	
<b>Features</b>	
■ Intuos4 Grip Pen	
■ User-defined Touch Ring with toggle functionality	
■ Eight customisable ExpressKeys including OLED-displays	
■ 203 x 127mm active area	
■ 5,080 dpi (2,000 lines/cm) resolution	
■ 2,048 pressure levels	
■ USB	
■ Bluetooth	
■ USB charging cable	
■ Rechargeable lithium-ion battery	
<b>System Requirements</b>	
PC: Windows XP/Vista/7	
Mac: OSX 10.4.8 or higher	
Bluetooth-enabled computer (version 1.2 or higher)	
<b>Rating</b>	
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10



Fantasy, sci-fi and horror illustrator Dave has worked for Games Workshop and Wizards of the Coast among others.

[www.rustybaby.com](http://www.rustybaby.com)

# ArtRage for iPad

iPad



**COMPLETE PACKAGE** Taking the best features from ArtRage 3 onto Apple's tablet, this iPad app is an artist's delight

Price £4 Company Ambient Design Web [www.artrage.com](http://www.artrage.com)

**A** long-standing fixture on desktop computers, ArtRage may not have the following of Painter, but it's a well-regarded package with a loyal fanbase. This release sees ArtRage migrate to the iPad, where the program has the potential to reach a whole new audience.

ArtRage for Windows and Mac OS X already offers a tablet-friendly interface, which means the fundamentals that define the software haven't changed greatly for the iPad release. The two bottom corners present touch-sensitive buttons that reveal brushes and pens to the left, and the colour palette to the right.

The brushes are as capable as you'd expect from ArtRage's pedigree, with oil, watercolour and airbrush among the media provided. Once you've laid down some paint, a Palette Knife tool enables you to smear it around. You can also create line art with a pencil, pen or crayon. Sliders enable you to adjust size and pressure, along with media-specific options such as drying time for paint. When you establish a combination of settings that you like, you can save it to a preset list to access at any time.

The potential of the brushes and pens is improved further with the ability to customise

ArtRage for iPad borrows the best bits of its desktop counterpart for the tablet PC era. The blending modes include a boost for watercolour, and you can pin reference to the canvas while you paint.

your canvas. Choose from canvas presets or make your own adjustments, and you'll see your tools respond differently to the new conditions. The interaction is progressive, meaning that you could, for example, lay down watercolours on a rough canvas, then smooth the surface to work over the paint with crayons.

You can also work on layers, with blending modes that will be familiar to Photoshop artists, along with a Watercolour mode that enhances your paint based on its thickness. Add the brushes, pens, canvas and blend modes together, and you have a toolset to satisfy dedicated artists, wrapped in an interface that builds on the strengths of its desktop counterpart. ArtRage for iPad is a pleasure to paint with.



## DETAILS

### Features

- Natural painting tools
- Sketching and drawing tools
- Tool presets
- Custom canvas
- Reference pinning
- Layers and blend modes
- Image export
- Open files in desktop ArtRage

### System Requirements

Apple iPad; not compatible with iPhone or iPod touch

### Rating



Inspire Pro's interface, which is borrowed from the iPhone, doesn't suit the iPad.



iPad

## Inspire Pro

**BIG BROTHER** Bringing a popular iPhone paint tool to the iPad

Price £5

Company KiwiPixel

Web [www.kiwipixel.com](http://www.kiwipixel.com)

RATING

Inspire Pro sees the popular iPhone painting app Inspire making the transition to iPad, retaining the app's tools but providing more screen real estate. There's little change to the existing Inspire toolset in this Pro edition – a decision that has both good and bad outcomes.

The Pro interface adopts Inspire's unusual approach, with tools in every corner of the screen and halfway along each edge. On the iPhone, the system is fluent to use, with little movement required to access a tool; on the iPad, the top-mounted tools in particular seem a long way off. The middle-bottom screen temporarily brings all tools to the bottom edge, where they arguably belong for easy access.

The iPhone edition's brushes are translated wholesale to the iPad. There are just five of them, but the limited range works better than you might expect, thanks to the brushes' sheer quality. Strokes taper away naturally, and you can temporarily remove paint from a brush to smudge the canvas. The interface may need a rethink for the iPad, but the brushes feel right at home.

NatureArt's weather effects need some work before they look like they're part of the scenery.



## NatureArt 1.5

### STORMY WEATHER

Add environmental effects to art or photos

**Price** \$72 - \$189

**Company** Akvis

**Web** [www.akvis.com](http://www.akvis.com)

**RATING**

**While some digital artists are content to reproduce traditional painting techniques within their chosen package, others are hungry to explore the limitless possibilities of software, splicing photos and 3D models together to create a new definition of painting. It's within the latter camp that NaturalArt may find some appeal.**

Supplied as both a standalone program and a Photoshop plug-in, NaturalArt enables you to alter the conditions of outdoor scenes, adding clouds to a clear sky or dramatic lightning to a sunny day.

The controls couldn't be easier to pick up: select the image area you want to edit, choose your effect and activate it. You can then use sliders to make changes on the fly, as long as you've enabled NatureArt's Autorun mode.

While the tools are accessible, the results are variable. Sun and Lightning effects achieve decent results with some tweaking (and self-restraint), but the Clouds effect is disappointing, with little variety to offer. Weather on demand for artists is a great idea, but the execution needs some further development before NatureArt can become an essential part of your digital painting arsenal.

MAC  
&  
PC

# Unity 3

MAC  
&  
PC

**GAMES MAKER** Advanced new tools enable anyone to create rich 3D games that could top the sales charts

**Price** \$1,500 **Company** Unity Technologies **Web** [www.unity3d.com](http://www.unity3d.com)

If you've created characters or worlds that you return to repeatedly in your art, chances are you've dreamt of seeing them in their own movie or video game. 3D animation packages mean that movie-making is a realistic ambition, but creating a game has always seemed out of reach.

Unity is a game development suite that's been producing waves in the creative community, making the creation of professional-standard games less complicated than alternative, programmer-centric options. It saw explosive growth in 2010, increasing its registered user list from 13,000 to 250,000 in 12 months.

This latest release tidies up the artist-friendly workflow, enabling you to import 3D models and textures simply by dragging them into the program. Basic game behaviours like collision detection and enemy attacks are included, so you can attach them to objects without any programming knowledge. A free version enables you

to explore Unity's potential, with tutorials and an active community helping you learn the ropes.

The biggest improvements in Unity, however, are reserved for the \$1,500 Pro edition, aimed at larger development studios. An advanced light-mapping system enables you to bake light and shadow into your scene textures, while an occlusion culling system improves the game engine's handling of out-of-view objects that don't need to be drawn at any given time. Both technologies are brought in from specialists, making genuinely powerful tools available to developers who might not have been able to afford them before.

Unity goes a long way towards making game development accessible to a new audience, although you still need some expertise in 3D animation and modelling to create your assets. But for newcomers to this booming area, Unity is a great way not just to get started, but also to create titles that can compete with the best.

### DETAILS

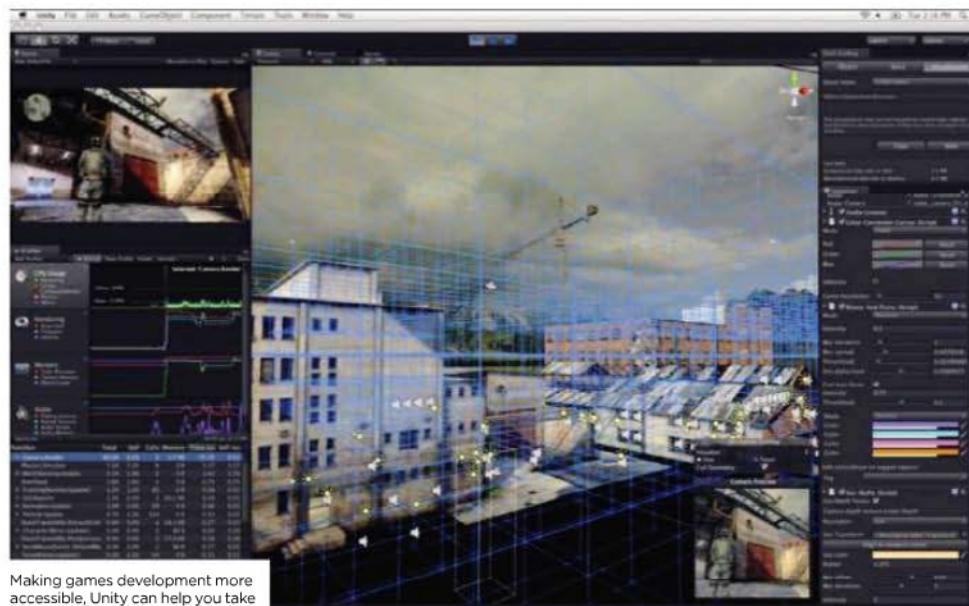
#### Features

- Integrated editor
- Scene construction tools
- Drag-and-drop asset import
- Instant interactive preview
- Publish to PC, Mac or web
- Extra licences for iPhone or Wii publishing

#### System Requirements

**PC:** Windows XP, Vista or 7, graphics card with 64MB video RAM  
**Mac:** Intel processor, Mac OS X 10.5 or later, graphics card with 64MB video RAM

#### Rating



Making games development more accessible, Unity can help you take your creations into new media.



# Spectrum 17

**SWEET 17** The best fantasy art of 2009 does the talking in this brilliant compendium collection.

**Editors** Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner **Publisher** Underwood Books **Price** £20  
**Web** [www.spectrumfantasticart.com](http://www.spectrumfantasticart.com) **ISBN** 9781599290430 **Available** Now

**U**nlike 'best of the year' competitors Exposé and Exotique that look at digital and CG character art, the Spectrum books have always exclusively focused on fantasy art. While this has concentrated their scope in one respect, it's also opened up their pages to traditional art and sculpture, and so produced a totally different prospect to Ballistic's releases.

Spectrum 17 offers a spectacular collection, with an array of the finest known and upcoming fantasy artists working today - you'll find established greats like Donato Giancola sharing pages with the prodigious talent of 22-year-old Irvin Rodriguez.

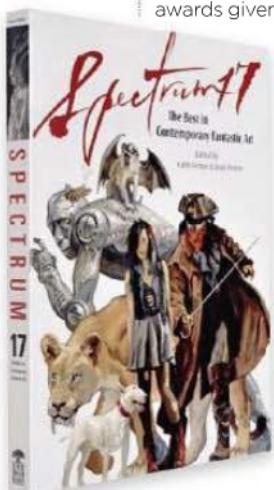
The unsung star of this book, however, is the editor. The order of the images - placed either to create harmony or discordance but always emphasising the art's unique qualities - is faultless. The structure of the book is broken

down into chapters on advertising, book art, comics, concept, dimensional (sculpture), editorial, institutional and unpublished, but these distinctions are kept in the background, never taking focus away from the images. As such, there's a democracy to what's on show, and although there's gold and silver awards given in each category, they're not given at the expense of other pieces.

The book opens with an opinionated '2009 in review' from Spectrum director Arnie Fenner, and a slightly ranting message that eventually finds its target by chairman Cathy Fenner, followed by a tribute to deceased master artist Al Williamson. The opening section of the book also sets the socio-economic climate that this art was created in, but for those

uninterested in this dressing there's no superfluous comment or text in the rest of the book, making this the best fantasy art compendium out there.

**RATING**



## Further reading...

An in-depth look at a sci-fi classic and a collection of mostly beautiful digital art

### The Making of The Empire Strikes Back

**Author** J. W. Rinzler

**Publisher** Aurum Press **Price** £40

**ISBN** 9781845135553 **Available** Now

**RATING**



J. W. Rinzler's tome makes exhaustive but oh-so-enjoyable reading. He writes with authority, presenting the events of Empire's filming process as they happened, and mixing them with retrospective comments from the talent in front of and behind the cameras. Key conversations between director and actors are reproduced in full, which has the wonderful effect of turning the reader into a silent spectator on-set. Meanwhile, the archives have been raided to reveal script notes, concepts, models, matte paintings and production photos. It all adds up to a book that reveals just how much effort went into making the best film in the Star Wars saga.

### Exotique 6

**Editor** Daniel Wade

**Publisher** Ballistic Publishing **Price** £46

**ISBN** 9781921002816 **Available** Now

**RATING**



It was always brave of Ballistic Publishing to run two series - Exposé and Exotique - that pooled from the same digital art world, separated only by one word: beauty. Exotique's own brand of "the world's most beautiful CG characters" focuses mainly on idealised or heroic female art, leaving Exposé everything else. Exotique 6 inexplicably messes with this unwritten formula. There are still exquisite CG characters, but from page 56 onwards images with titles like Alien Detective and Bloodthirsty Godfather crash the party. This selection is still great, but if Ballistic continues to cast its net of beauty too wide it might make one of its two flagship series redundant.

Discover how to create gorgeous landscapes using Raphael's clever combination of techniques.



Raphael developed his skills working on big-name films and video games. He shows you how to mimic his workflow to generate convincing matte paintings with accurate perspective.

## Digital Environment Painting Matte Painting with Raphael Lacoste

**PHOTO REALISM** Fantasy art master Raphael Lacoste goes beyond digital painting as he encourages you to embrace all the tools at your disposal



**Publisher** The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$59 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** [www.thegnomonworkshop.com](http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com)

**M**atte painting is the art of convincing a movie-viewing audience that the fantasy world the characters are set against is utterly real. It depends on the artist's understanding of light and how it defines colour and form – knowledge that Raphael Lacoste has developed to the highest level in his stunning, epic landscapes.

The methods used for matte painting have transformed since every brush stroke was painstakingly applied to a glass plate. Raphael's approach combines photo-manipulation and 3D modelling, with digital painting used for surface textures and detailing. The skill lies in making these disparate parts work as a seamless whole. Raphael's painterly sensibility, which is apparent from the first value studies he creates, is what makes this workflow succeed.

This video lays Raphael's process bare. You'll see how he selects images

from his personal photo library and superimposes them over his reference sketch, scaling and masking to make the pieces fit. He also steps into 3ds Max to build the scene's architectural forms in the correct perspective, again using his own photos for surface textures. You can apply the 3D techniques shown here to most 3D packages, not just the pricey 3ds Max, although the chapter on 3D modelling and texturing is more an overview than a step-by-step guide.

If using the digital equivalent of a conventional paint set is your main route towards creating fantasy worlds, Raphael can introduce you to new ways of working that might transform your artwork. But further study of 3D software and, above all, the principles established by classic artists are required to pull off his tricks to the same degree. And even if you're already familiar with these techniques, you'll see the critical roles that research and colour play in matte painting.

### DETAILS

- Topics covered**
  - Painting thumbnails in grey values
  - Painting a mood sketch in Photoshop
  - Setting up a 3D scene in 3ds Max
  - Relighting elements in 2D
  - Photographic integration
  - Colour-matching
  - Atmospheric depth
  - Colour-correction

**Length**  
184 minutes

**Rating**

### ARTIST PROFILE

## RAPHAEL LACOSTE

Raphael Lacoste was the art director at Ubisoft on titles including Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed, winning a VES Award in 2006 for his work on the Two Thrones cut-scene from Prince of Persia. Raphael then stepped away from the games industry to work as a matte painter and senior concept artist on films such as Terminator Salvation, Journey to the Center of the Earth and Repo Men. In 2009,

he returned to the video games industry as a senior art director for Electronic Arts Montreal.



[www.rafael-lacoste.com](http://www.rafael-lacoste.com)



Despite losing her superpowers, Milla Jovovich's character still looks cool with a couple of handguns at her disposal

## Resident Evil: Afterlife

**BRAIN DEAD** The zombie 'n' guns series undergoes a successful reboot and returns to its claustrophobic roots

**Distributor** Sony **Cert** 15 **Price** £20 (£25 Blu-ray) **Available** Now

**L**istening to director Paul W.S. Anderson talking excitedly about the number of undead in his movie, it's hard not to get caught up in his enthusiasm. And there are thousands on screen, all looking to chew on series heroine Alice (played again by Milla Jovovich).

Although the opening is a long-winded series of recaps – an attempt to reboot the franchise by stripping Alice of her superpowers fans resented – once it gets going, Resident Evil: Afterlife is great fun. Alice is back searching for the mysterious safe haven of Arcadia. Her quest reunites her with Claire Redfield (Heroes' Ali Larter), before we finally meet Chris Redfield (Prison Break's Wentworth Miller) and a band of survivors in an ash-fog covered Los Angeles. What follows is a lot of slow-mo shooting as the gang fends off a new breed of zombies



straight from Resident Evil 5, including the game's axe-wielding Executioner.

There's a creative confidence about Afterlife that past Resident Evil movies lacked. Production designer Ave Grewal's crisp, sterile corporate set designs contrast with the decay and rubble of the movie's core. There are surprises, too: zombies now swim and burrow, while – in a nod to The Thing – heads flower open to reveal toothed tentacles. For once there are some fun shocks behind the numerous fanboy references.

But if you really want to indulge your inner geek then the disc's many featurettes and extras, which include deleted and extended scenes, casting outtakes, commentaries, concept art showreels and SFX interviews, will satisfy your needs. After four films, it seems Anderson has finally got it.

**RATING**

## Other new releases...

A family friendly thrill ride underground, and a demonic trip into mock-doc land



### The Hole

**Distributor** Entertainment One

**Certificate** 12

**Price** £20

**Available** 17 January

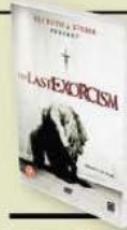
**RATING**



There are few directors who can dance the fine line between family film and video nasty with quite the same control as Joe Dante, and The Hole is no different.

The hole of the title is in the basement of brothers Dane (Chris Massoglia) and Lucas (Nathan Gamble), a bottomless pit that brings your fears to life. With the help of neighbour Julie (Haley Bennett) the three must resolve to fight whatever lurks in the pit, including a stop-motion killer clown and a Ring-inspired ghostly girl.

The pace goes slightly off-kilter in the final third, though, as chills are dispensed with for effects thrills – which can feel flat without the original 3D. The DVD lacks extras too, with only cast interviews and a making-of featurette adding value. However, if you're willing to look beyond the training wheels, The Hole is a fun and rewarding teen horror tale.



### The Last Exorcism

**Distributor** Optimum Releasing

**Certificate** 18

**Price** £18

**Available** Now

**RATING**

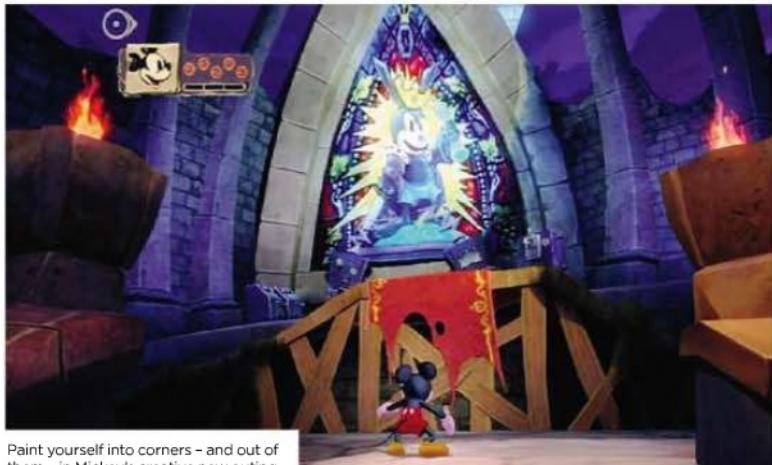


More than 10 years after The Blair Witch Project popularised mock-doc horror, The Last Exorcism proves there's still life in the genre, with its quality frights building towards an atmospheric crescendo.

Reverend Cotton Marcus justifies his theatrical exorcisms on gullible rednecks as performing a psychological service to the religiously backward. With a camera crew invited to record the spectacle, he's all set to give the performance of his life – but his subject, Nell Sweetzer, continues to act strangely.

Director Daniel Stamm shot numerous takes of one scene until the actors lost all affected mannerisms, and this makes each doubt and revelation in the movie all the more powerful, but it's actress Ashley Bell that the real revelation as the schizophrenic focus of the film.

# Play DVDs and games



Paint yourself into corners – and out of them – in Mickey's creative new outing.

## Epic Mickey

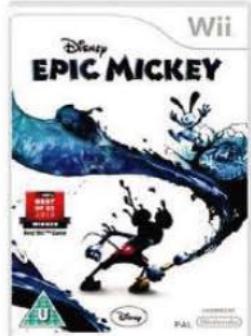
**HOUSE OF MOUSE** The iconic rodent gets a makeover in Warren Spector's paint-splattering platform game

**Format** Wii **Publisher** Disney **Price** £40 **Available** Now  
**Web** [www.disney.co.uk/epicmickey](http://www.disney.co.uk/epicmickey)

**B**illed as an attempt by Disney to rebrand its most iconic character, Epic Mickey is game guru Warren Spector's first title since 2004's Thief: Deadly Shadows, and arguably one of his finest efforts to date.

Unfurling in the whimsical, steampunk-inspired Wasteland, Epic Mickey whisks you through a spellbinding tale that sees the mighty mouse battle the minions of the Mad Doctor and the Phantom Blot. It's set in a world populated by a series of classic Disney characters.

The goal is simple. Use your Wii Remote as a paint brush to apply either paint or paint thinner and interact with the world. While it's a little awkward at first, Epic Mickey's control system is an ingenious idea and a brilliantly conceived mechanic by Spector and his team at Junction Point. Using it, you create platforms to reach goals and douse enemies with thinner or paint. Choosing the latter transforms enemies into allies, while the former turns them into aggressive opponents.



before a second dose erases them from Disney's new quirky alt-world. You'll make many choices along the way in keeping with the game's non-linear approach, each of which will affect later missions and Epic Mickey's heart-warming closing reel.

Every painterly splash of the game is a joy to behold. Warren and his team spent months scouring Disney's vaults for inspiration – including crumbling reference sculptures from Fantasia – to create their warped Disney world. Concept artists like Fred Gambino and Gary Glover were put to work early on in the game's development to

provide a surreal and bizarre take on the Disney world, which in the end weren't used, but it's a testament to the game's ambitions for its artistic scope. Epic Mickey is a triumph of innovation and artistry, a reinvented Disney and quite possibly the finest-looking Wii game to date.

**RATING**

## Also look at...

The tie-in for a long-awaited film and an over-reaching action-adventure title

### TRON Evolution

**Format** 360, PC, PS3, PSP, Wii, DS  
**Publisher** Disney  
**Price** From £30  
**Available** Now  
**RATING**

A new TRON movie naturally heralds the arrival of a new TRON videogame. Despite the best efforts of developer Propaganda Games to weave the film's storyline into the narrative structure of the game without spoiling any of the surprises the film-makers have in store for you, it's a game that takes few risks.

Aesthetically, Propaganda has knocked Evolution out of the park. You'll marvel at the neon-soaked landscapes, but after a while it all becomes a bit pointless in a game that chooses not to innovate, but rather play it safe with bland third-person brawling and racing mechanics.

If, however, you're adamant about giving it a go, then the PlayStation 3 version is the one to get. It's Move compatible, which adds a little variety, and can be played in eye-popping 3D, provided you've got the right telly. It's initially a little clumsy, but once you get used to it, TRON Evolution looks exceptionally slick in the third dimension.

### Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom

**Format** Xbox 360, PS3  
**Publisher** Namco Bandai  
**Price** £45  
**Available** Now  
**RATING**

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom is a delicately designed slice of gaming. It's been billed as the next Shadow of the Colossus, and what you get for your money is 30-plus hours of team-based action involving a boy and his monster, peppered with puzzles, stealth and combat.

Unfortunately, it's overambitious and is soon hindered by sloppy production values, including dreadful voice acting, a daft script and choppy textures that lack detail. Despite the technical shortcomings, the game's world is a plush one, filled with ancient buildings, grassy knolls, beautiful skylines and luscious flora and fauna that are nothing short of a delight to investigate and revel in.

It's a shame the drawbacks detract from what is otherwise a competent game; its unique world could have been a treat to explore. But with Enslaved walking a similar line, and Sony's Last Guardian lurking in the wings, Majin is fighting hard for your money – and losing.

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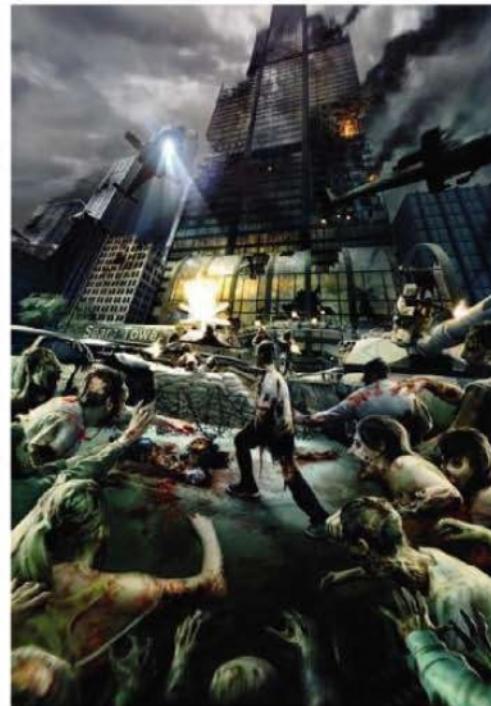
Image by Lee Perry Smith



LOCATION Gateshead, UK RECENT PROJECT Enslaved: Odyssey to the West WEB [www.atomhawk.com](http://www.atomhawk.com)

## Atomhawk

**PHOENIX RISING** With its concept art veterans, budding new talent and plenty of top-secret projects in the pipeline, this is a studio to watch out for in 2011



**A** tomhawk rose from the ashes of Midway Games UK in July 2009, following its collapse at the nadir of the recession. After much hard work trying to keep the studio alive, art director Curnon 'Ron' Ashtiani reacted to Midway's closure the only way he knew how. "I didn't want to dwell on what was a negative experience. But while it was very hard at the time, that moment went on to be one of the best and most liberating events of my life." And so Atomhawk was born.



"I'm a fan of Ray Harryhausen movies," says Pete, "which inspired me to tackle a huge dragon painting."



Today, there's something in the way Ron avoids questions about his studio's current projects that suggests the company is doing well for itself. Allowing their work on games like Mortal Kombat 9, Dead Nation, Driver 5, and The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest to speak for itself, he's tight-lipped about current projects. "It's all top secret," he says, happily revealing that it's got a lot to be secretive about.

### Old and new

The company's located in Tyneside's Gateshead, a short walk from the Baltic Art Gallery. Like its predecessor, Atomhawk primarily creates concept art for games, but it's also established a growing online design department. "The team is about a 50-50 split between ex-Midway artists and new talent that we've brought in over the past year," says Ron. Accompanying Ron from Midway are lead concept artists Pete Thompson and Corlen Kruger, and lead graphic designer Steve Pick. "Steph 'The Frenchman' Stamb came from the world of comics

Pete's personal favourite piece from his days at Midway. "I just love the way the sea came out," he says.

Inspired by the novelist Max Brooks, Corlen visualised a scene from the book WWZ.

to join us as senior concept artist," Ron says. "Dan Gilmore is a talented Flash artist and great designer who started as an intern and ended up staying. And in September 2010 Charlie Bowater joined us... For those who don't already know her work, she's definitely one to watch out for in the future - she's awesomely talented." (Have a look at this month's cover art for proof.)

With its eight-strong workforce, including industry veterans with decades of experience, Charlie's getting the most out of her first studio job. "I've learnt a lot since starting



## ARTIST INTERVIEW

**PETE THOMPSON**

*Atomhawk's lead concept artist talks about the studio's set-up*

**How does Atomhawk compare to other studios that you've worked at?**

We're a specialist company that deals with the art side of game production, so essentially we're working on multiple games across all platforms with a large list of clients, as opposed to a developer studio that has maybe one to two projects on the go. The great thing is the freedom of jumping from one genre to another, rather than working on one driving game for three years, which I did during my developer studio days.

**Does this ever provide interesting challenges?**

Several of us often need to work on the same project, matching each other's styles, which is no easy feat seeing as an individual concept artist has his or her own techniques and idiosyncrasies.

**What artists in your field do you admire the most?**

Three guys immediately spring to mind when it comes to the world of conceptual art. Ralph McQuarrie was my childhood hero – he was the guy that got me into concept art in the first place. Next up would be Stephan Martiniere. During my time at Midway Studios, Stephan would pretty much shape the way I approached technique, and I progressed tremendously through studying the way he approached his work. I'm honoured that he wrote the foreword for our new art book. Finally, I should give an honourable mention to Craig Mullins, whose work never ceases to amaze me. The man is on another level!



Pete is a co-founder of Atomhawk. He previously worked for Midway Games on titles that include *Wheelman*.

[www.atomhawk.com](http://www.atomhawk.com)



**PROJECTS** Mortal Kombat 9, The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest



This is a personal piece by the youngest addition to Atomhawk, Charlie Bowater.

## “The team is about a 50-50 split between ex-Midway artists and new talent”

here,” she says, “and the other concept guys have become like sages to me.”

Carrying over the odd Midway title, like Mortal Kombat, and working with new clients, Atomhawk will certainly be offering Charlie a variety of projects. For lead concept artist Corlen Kruger, this is one of the studio's main appeals. “One unique characteristic of working here is the diversity of projects I get to work on over a short period of time,”

he says. “Working at a game studio as a concept artist, you normally find yourself locked into a single project for a set period of time. It's different here, and this new change in pace is a challenge I enjoy.”

**Branching out**

This diversity is, in part, due to Atomhawk's focus on creating game production art for several clients, as opposed to being a developer studio working on one title for a period of several years. “In Midway, we'd all used outsourcing for many years,” says Ron, “but when we wanted high-level skills like conceptual design, UI design and video production work, we struggled to find what we needed and often could only find individual freelancers who were up to scratch.” Atomhawk presents itself as a one-stop shop for these art requirements, distinct from the development side of the project.

It helps that Atomhawk has become associated both with a strong style of art, and also the ability to change this to suit the project. “I guess the artwork we're best known for is the epic and cinematic style that we often apply to action-based intellectual property,” says Ron. “We're very good at creating alternate worlds and atmosphere, but we've recently produced some much more endearing, earthy and pure styled illustrations.” And the project that inspired this new direction? “It's a real departure from the sci-fi and fantasy action work we normally do, but the details are secret I'm afraid.”



On your DVD

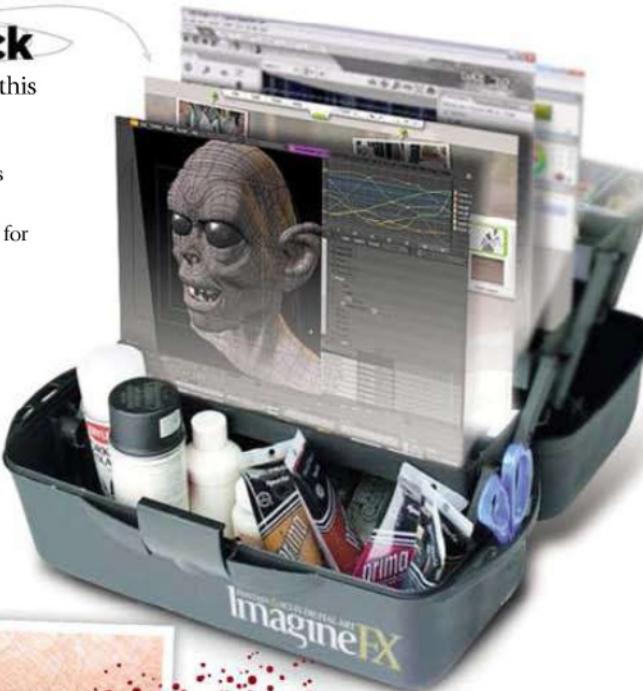
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# FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 8 FEBRUARY 2011

Printed in the UK by Midway (cover) William Gibbons (inside) distributed by Seymour Distribution Ltd +44 (0) 207 429 4000 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1B 9PT

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ABC 16,815  
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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (Symbol: FUTURE).

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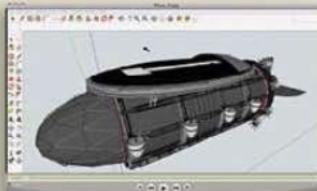
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## TOP ART ADVICE!

### Experts answer your questions

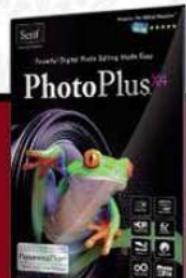
Hair today Learn how to paint your character's hair with Mélanie Delon

Need for speed See how Stefan Kopinski introduces a sense of momentum to his art



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“Anything can exist in fantasy – you’re only limited by what you can imagine” **Matthew Stewart**



See page 50 for more of this award-winning artist's work.

## Techniques and advice...

USE COLOUR TO ATTRACT ATTENTION | DEPICT MECHANICAL PARTS QUICKLY | CREATE A SENSE OF SPEED | PAINT CUTE EYES | SHOW REFLECTIONS IN A WINDOW | PAINT TRANSLUCENT SKIN | DESIGN A HAIR STYLE | SIMPLIFY A COMPLEX IMAGE | DRAW TENTACLES | POSE A TOUGH FEMALE BARBARIAN | DRAW POWER BLASTS | PAINT A DECORATIVE WALL | AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...